

November 27, 2017

Dear colleagues,

Last week I communicated with our congressional delegation regarding the House-passed *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* [HR 1], which would eliminate several important tax benefits designed to off-set the costs of higher education. Collectively, these changes, if enacted, would have serious consequences for educational attainment in Alaska and impede our efforts to develop the highly-skilled workforce we need to move Alaska's economy forward.

While I recognize the difficult challenges of tax reform and the need to balance competing priorities, the bill includes specific provisions that would negatively impact Alaskan students and their families including the repeal of the student loan interest deduction, tax employer-provided tuition assistance, elimination of the university's ability to provide employees and graduate-level teaching and research assistants with non-taxable tuition waivers, and elimination of the Lifetime Learning Credit.

Alaska has one of the lowest college going rates in the nation. The University of Alaska has launched a number of strategic initiatives to help address this enrollment shortfall so that we can provide an educated workforce and contribute to diversifying Alaska's economy. In today's environment of increasing college costs and rising levels of student debt, we should be doing everything possible to help Alaskans improve their skills and become more competitive in the marketplace.

The Senate is considering its own tax code reform legislation, and I will continue to advocate the university's position on these issues. You can read my entire letter to the congressional delegation [here](#).

Sincerely,

Jim Johnsen