

State of Alaska

Legislative Affairs Agency

Office of Information & Teleconference



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Rep. David Guttenberg, Chair
Legislative Council

FROM: Tim Powers, Manager *TP*
Information & Teleconference

DATE: September 8, 2018

SUBJECT: Information and Teleconference Budget

For your consideration, I request that we return all year-round LIO's to full time operation, ending Friday afternoon closures during the interim and restoring parity between LIO staff and the rest of the Legislative Affairs Agency.

The Information and Teleconference section has had several budget cuts in recent years.

In FY 16, Information and Teleconference was reduced by \$358,700. The reduction meant that the Barrow and Kotzebue Information Officer positions were reduced from 12-month to 6-month; the Information Assistant positions in Fairbanks and Mat-Su LIO's reduced from 12-month to 6-month; eight Juneau moderator positions were reduced from five to four months; and the casual labor pool was reduced.

In FY 17, Information and Teleconference was reduced an additional \$298,000, and Legislative Council required all year-round LIOs to close at noon on Fridays during the interim; 17 employees were reduced from 12 months to 11.3 months, resulting in a 6.1% reduction in annual salary. The example of the Court System closure is not applicable in this case because the entire Legislative Branch does not close at noon on Fridays. Constituents, staff and legislators are often confused by the LIO section closure while other legislative business sections are still operating.

Combined, FY 16 and 17 reductions totaled \$656,700, and left the Information and Teleconference section with zero 12-month employees, the only legislative section impacted as such.

The budget reductions negatively impacted employee morale and retention. Not only did full-time employees have lower paychecks, but the reduction also negatively impacted their retirement. For an employee in longevity, it would take two step increases (four years worked) to get back to their annual salary before the cut was implemented.

Attrition has been roughly 20% during this period. Since the budget reductions, there have been 14 vacancies in Information and Teleconference. Of those vacancies, 10 have been Information Officer positions across the state in less than three years. Prior to the reductions, there were eight vacancies in nine years. In addition to staff reductions, the LIO's have seen an increase in teleconference workloads.

The annual savings from closing the Unalaska LIO (\$106,072) covers most of the funding necessary to restore LIO positions previously reduced (\$107,664). Further, with recently implemented procedural changes and realized efficiencies, the Information and Teleconference component ended FY18 with a balance of \$190,000.

MOTION: I move that Legislative Council restore the positions currently budgeted for 11.3 months to 12 months effective immediately.