
From: Frances Ulmer [affau@uaa.alaska.edu]
Sent: Friday, February 11, 2011 11:08 AM
To: Sen. Gary Stevens
Subject: sessions
Attachments: image001.jpg

Dear Gary,

I understand that you have introduced legislation to provide a compromise between the 90-day session limit and the 120-day session limit. Based on my personal experience as a legislator, I think that makes sense.

The 90-day session is very popular with the public, and in many ways it helps focus the attention of legislators on the most important business of that year.

What it does not do is allow much time for the public to weigh in on important policy decisions, or enable the legislature to delve more deeply into long-term issues that need the attention of our elected representatives and senators. Some issues are complicated and require both analysis and deliberation. That can be much more challenging when you need to watch the clock and pass a budget.

One other way that the legislature could achieve this goal is with more focused special committee work during the interim. But that approach tends to limit the number of legislators who can effectively participate.

Someday, I hope that the legislature will address the inefficiencies associated with annual budgeting. A two-year cycle for agencies and the legislature would save a lot of time and paper. There will always have to be mid-course (annual) adjustments, but the underlying legal, policy, and program choices can and should be made, in my opinion, with a twenty-four month horizon.

I want to clarify that I am certainly not speaking on behalf of the University of Alaska or UAA or anyone except myself. You asked my opinion and I am happy to share it, although it is based primarily on my experience in a very different decade.

Wishing you a successful session.

Fran

Fran Ulmer