

Alaska State Legislature
REPRESENTATIVE BRYCE EDGMON
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Memorandum

Date: February 9, 2017

To: Representative Matt Claman, Chair
House Judiciary Committee

From: Representative Bryce Edgmon
Speaker of the House

Re: Funding of Tribal Courts in Alaska

During the House Judiciary Committee's February 8th hearing on HB 8—Enforcement of Foreign Protective Orders—Representative Reinbold asked how tribal courts in Alaska are funded.

In seeking an answer, my aide Tim Clark consulted with Lisa Jaeger, Tribal Government Specialist for the Tanana Chiefs Conference. According to Ms. Jaeger, there is no single funding template for tribal courts in the state.

Grants from the Department of Justice do sometimes play a part, Ms. Jaeger said, but the grants are highly competitive, and the relatively few grants that are awarded have a duration of only three years.

Most Alaska tribal courts function on a shoestring budget and depend on the volunteerism of their officials and other participants. Some enjoy a paid clerk of the court, who sometimes is also employed through resources associated with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). (Some tribal courts carry out child custody matters under ICWA.)

While in the past it has not been Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) policy to fund tribal courts in Alaska, funding was included in the federal budget drafted last year that will distribute \$5000 to every Alaska tribe. This one-time funding can be used for any purpose to enhance a tribal court, including judges' stipends, training, code development, or equipment.

Some of this BIA funding will also go to assessments of 30 Alaska tribal courts. These assessments are designed to help them improve their institutions and practices.

I hope this information adequately responds to Representative Reinbold's question.

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