

ALASKA COURT SYSTEM
State of Alaska
Office of the Administrative Director

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Doug Wooliver
Deputy Administrative Director

March 23, 2012

The Honorable Hollis French
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Room 417
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator French:

The current statute governing geographic pay differentials for judges limits the rate of the differential to a maximum of 17.5% and applies only to the first \$40,000 of a judge's salary (17.5% of \$40,000 is \$7,000). Because that amount of differential does not fully cover the increased cost of living in many rural communities, the court system requested the introduction of SB 168. That bill would have applied to judges' salaries the same geographic pay differentials that apply to the salaries of most other non-union state employees.

The attached draft committee substitute takes a different approach. Instead of changing the differential rates for judges the CS preserves the current rates, but removes the \$40,000 cap. It also adds Dillingham to the statute¹.

This alternative to SB 168 has the effect of increasing rural court judge's geographic differentials from a maximum of \$7,000 to a maximum of \$31,752. Although the draft CS applies lower differential rates to the salaries of judges than are applied to the salaries of other state employees, the actual dollar amount of the differential is similar to that received by many of the state attorneys practicing in rural Alaska.

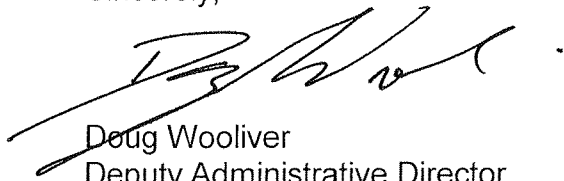
The draft CS is an approach that the court system considered a likely amendment to the original bill and is one that we support.

¹ At the time the original geographic pay differential statute was adopted there was not a resident superior court judge in Dillingham. However, since that judgeship was created in 1996 the court has always provided that judge with the same geographic differential received by other judges in the region.

The draft CS also reduces our fiscal notes from a total of \$795,110 to \$241,199, which we hope will address the "sticker shock" associated with the original bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this draft CS and please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Wooliver", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Doug Wooliver
Deputy Administrative Director
Alaska Court System