I am a permanent, seasonal employee of the Division of Forestry. I work as a Wildland Firefighter. Our position pays roughly as much as a beginning public school teacher. Most of us have medical issues that persist the longer we stay in this career field. Due to the Affordable Care Act, we are forced to purchase our own health care during the winter months. Since most of us already need to work at another job during our layoff period, taking away a cost of living increase that was part of our union contract only makes it more difficult to keep experienced and qualified firefighters in this field.

Alaska deals with wildfires each and every summer. Combatting these fires takes well-trained, dedicated and experienced men and women. The harder it is to make a decent living at our job, the more rural Alaska suffers from inadequate fire suppression. Please reconsider reneging on the cost of living increase that was promised in our union contract.