

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND AUDIT**

June 7, 2001

3:35 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gene Therriault, Chair
Senator Randy Phillips
Senator Lyman Hoffman

Representative Hugh Fate, Vice Chair
Representative Eldon Mulder
Representative Ken Lancaster
Representative Reggie Joule

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Jerry Ward
Senator Dave Donley

Representative John Harris

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

BUDGET REQUEST FROM LEGISLATIVE FINANCE REGARDING NEW COMPUTER
SERVER

WITNESS REGISTER

DAVID TEAL, Legislative Fiscal Analyst
Legislative Finance Division
Alaska State Legislature
PO BOX 113200

Juneau, Alaska 99811

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke on behalf of the Legislative Finance
Division.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 01-6, SIDE A
Number 0001

CHAIR GENE THERRIAULT called the Joint Committee on Legislative
Budget and Audit meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. Present at the

call to order were Senators Therriault, Hoffman, and Phillips, and Representatives Fate, Mulder, Lancaster, and Joule.

CHAIR THERRIAULT stated that he was recently approached by Mr. Teal from Legislative Finance Division regarding the need for an updated computer server. Because the expenditure could exceed \$25,000, it requires prior approval of the committee. He noted that there is money in the current operating year's budget.

Number 0125

DAVID TEAL, Legislative Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Finance Division, Alaska State Legislature, came forth and stated that the problem with the server is primarily its speed and lack of performance. He said it is frustrating for the staff to sit there and watch it "spin" while someone is on the phone wanting an answer to a question. It takes up to three minutes, which is too little time to start anything else and too much time to sit there and calmly watch. He stated that [the Legislative Finance Division] has been looking at an upgrade for about six months, but hasn't narrowed the options down to a single choice; however, there is a good possibility that it will cost more than \$25,000. He added that [the division] is asking for the general authority to spend up to \$50,000 on the upgrade.

CHAIR THERRIAULT stated that he knows [the division] is trying to put more budget documents on the Internet. He asked if there is a problem with the current server as far as putting that kind of documentation on the Internet so that people can just go to the web site for some of the more mundane questions.

MR. TEAL responded that the real problem right now is three servers are running. Only one is really designed to be a server, and it is being used as the primary database; the other two are regular PCs (personal computers) that are being used as servers. He stated that early in the session the programmers were "booted" off of the server because every time they would run something the system would "grind to a halt." There is a third PC that supports only the web page because it was slowing things down as well. He remarked that the new server should be adequate to handle all three tasks, speed all of them up, and have the capability on the web site to provide "real time" requests.

Number 0350

SENATOR HOFFMAN asked if this would increase the speed for the users of the web page.

MR. TEAL answered that it should increase the speed and the capacity of reports that can be [stored].

SENATOR HOFFMAN stated that he thinks the fastest processor is the Pentium Four; however, all [the choices on the request provided for the members] say Pentium Three.

MR. TEAL responded that servers aren't as powerful in individual processors, and that servers generally don't have as high a clock speed as a desktop PC.

Number 0445

REPRESENTATIVE MULDER made a motion to approve the request for the Legislative Finance Division to spend up to \$50,000 on a new server system. There being no objection, the request was approved.

VICE CHAIR FATE asked if it is better to have one strong, high-performance server than two less powerful servers.

MR. TEAL answered yes, the separation on the development from the database itself has caused some problems because the servers have to communicate back and forth to make sure they are using the same data. Therefore, there is a "drag" on both servers.

VICE CHAIR FATE stated that on the chart [provided by Mr. Teal for the members] it shows that the server for \$8,450 far exceeds the other servers. If the other two were linked together, it would be about the same price as the one. He said he does not have any idea which would give the better performance and which would be more adequate.

MR. TEAL remarked that it is his understanding that the higher-cost machine gives the better performance. [If there were two servers], part of the problem with the performance would be that the duties might be split. Therefore, one would be for development and one for production, in which case both would be slower.

Number 0601

REPRESENTATIVE JOULE asked whether, as more demands are put on the system, [the division] has accommodated for future growth so that there won't be [another request] in a few years.

MR. TEAL responded that [the division] is looking into that. He stated that in a staff meeting two options were discussed: upgrading the server to something that is very fast or upgrading the [PCs]. All staff said they would keep their three-year-old [PCs]; they just wanted more speed on the reports. He stated that the server they have now is about a year and a half old, and he doesn't know how long a new server would last. He added that this is not the most expensive server they could get, and it won't have quite the performance [of a more expensive model], but he thinks [the division] will get three to five years out of it.

Number 0760

SENATOR PHILLIPS asked where and how [the division] is going to purchase [the servers].

MR. TEAL answered that he thinks those in DP (date processing) are favoring Dell.

SENATOR PHILLIPS asked if they are buying Outside or in-state, and suggested getting the best deal in-state.

MR. TEAL replied that [the division] does go through the standard state purchasing [procedures].

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the Joint Committee on Legislative Budget and Audit meeting was adjourned at 3:47 p.m.