

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 15, 2005
8:40 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Ralph Seekins, Chair
Senator Charlie Huggins, Vice Chair
Senator Gene Therriault

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Hollis French
Senator Gretchen Guess

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Overview Presentation: Department of Law

WITNESS REGISTER

Scott Nordstrand, Acting Attorney General
Department of Law
PO Box 110300
Juneau, AK 99811-0300

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR RALPH SEEKINS called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at [8:40:35 AM](#). Present were Senators Charlie Huggins, Gene Therriault and Chair Ralph Seekins.

Overview Presentation: Department of Law

SCOTT NORDSTRAND, acting attorney general for the Department of Law (DOL), gave an overview of the Civil Division.

[8:42:28 AM](#)

MR. NORDSTRAND presented the recruitment brochure, which is also a guide to the organization of the DOL.

[8:43:12 AM](#)

Sections within the Civil Division.

[8:45:54 AM](#)

Regulatory Affairs and Public Advocacy.

[8:47:26 AM](#)

Torts and Worker's Compensation.

[8:48:26 AM](#)

The Department of Transportation.

[8:49:03 AM](#)

Scope of Civil Division.

[8:50:24 AM](#)

Changes in Fiscal Year 05.
CINA work.

[8:52:10 AM](#)

Additions of attorneys for CINA, labor relations, ethics act, regulations, and legislation.

[8:54:12 AM](#)

CHAIR SEEKINS announced a 5-minute recess.

[9:02:54 AM](#)

CHAIR SEEKINS called the committee meeting back to order.

MR. NORDSTRAND continued the overview. He spoke of new initiatives.

[9:03:38 AM](#)

- Ability of government to collect money that is owed.
- Medicaid lien to recoup money from negligent people.
- Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) becoming aggressive in collections.

[9:06:18 AM](#)

- Investment in management technology and legal research technology.
- West KM (Knowledge Management).
- Web-based legal research service.

[9:09:46 AM](#)

- \$150K - \$200K savings per year by investing in technology.
- FY06 asking for a case management system for the Civil Division.
- Currently limited capabilities for research, and no calendaring system.

[9:12:08 AM](#)

- Billing system.
- Document management.

[9:13:50 AM](#)

Senator Therriault joined the committee.

[9:14:30 AM](#)

- Most important aspect of DOL: Recruitment and retention of attorneys.
- Pay is issue: DOL currently at \$50,000 starting pay as compared to private sector, which is \$80-90,000 per year.
- Federal and municipal lawyers paid more than state attorneys.

[9:18:05 AM](#)

Turnover and training affects DOLs casework and productivity.

[9:20:08 AM](#)

Department of Law response to current challenges:

- Recruitment tools
- Law clerk program
- Recruitment tours
- Updated technology
- Retain lawyers

[9:21:57 AM](#)

CHAIR SEEKINS asked Mr. Nordstrand a question regarding inter-agency charges and fees.

[9:22:12 AM](#)

MR. NORDSTRAND answered that it was a flat fee and it is budgeted.

[9:23:39 AM](#)

Some examples were discussed regarding attorney pay and hours worked.

[9:31:00 AM](#)

CHAIR SEEKINS commented regarding ethics and disclosure of pay. He asked Mr. Nordstrand if the Office of Public Advocacy hires attorneys from the private sector.

[9:31:56 AM](#)

MR. NORDSTRAND answered that they occasionally hire outside counsel.

[9:32:36 AM](#)

Chair Seekins and Mr. Nordstrand discussed the difference in pay for private and public sector attorneys.

[9:41:36 AM](#)

CHAIR SEEKINS asked Mr. Nordstrand why the DOL doesn't use transportation pools, and why the DOL doesn't use case management systems.

MR. NORDSTRAND replied that it takes capital, and that they do have a system, although calendaring is newer technology.

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Seekins adjourned the meeting at [9:46:31 AM](#).