

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT OMBUDSMAN SELECTION COMMITTEE**

February 13, 2007

12:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Co-Chair
Representative Nancy Dahlstrom, Co-Chair
Senator John Cowdery
Representative Bob Roses
Senator Fred Dyson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Beth Kerttula

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Nomination of Alaska Ombudsman

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record.

WITNESS REGISTER

LINDA LORD-JENKINS

Alaska Ombudsman

Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke as nominee.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CO-CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Joint Ombudsman Selection Committee meeting to order at [12:02:04 PM](#). Senators Dyson and Cowdery, Representative Roses, and Co-Chairs Stevens and Dahlstrom were present at the call to order.

Nomination/renewal of Ombudsman

[12:03:00 PM](#)

LINDA LORD-JENKINS said being the ombudsman is the best position in the world. She said there is a good thing going in the office and she would like to continue in her position. When she took over in 2002, there were few complaints coming in. Changes were made in how she runs the office, and the number of complaints

coming in is increasing. She said visibility and productivity have increased. She noted that the office responded to budget cuts of 1995 and 1997, "and I think we've refocused how we've done business and I'm pretty proud of what we've done."

[12:04:17 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STEVENS said he has talked to committee members and many other members of the legislature, and everyone is very pleased with her performance.

SENATOR DYSON said he will enthusiastically support her reappointment, and he asked her to discuss staffing and budget changes over the years.

[12:05:08 PM](#)

MS. LORD-JENKINS said the ombudsman office opened in 1975 with seven staff, and Alaska's population was 425,000. By 1986, there were 26 staff and Alaska's population was over 500,000. In 1986 the office was cut to 13 staff and then down to 11. "Our response at that point...was to eliminate the Fairbanks office," she stated. The budget was brought back up and the Fairbanks office was reopened. There were 22 employees in the early 1990s, but the budget was cut again in 1995 and 1997, leaving seven staff members. She said the appointed ombudsman and his deputy resigned at that time. An assistant ombudsman was delegated and served until 2002, and then Ms. Lord-Jenkins was hired. Staffing from 1997 to 2005 was seven, and the next year it was increased to eight. She said she is requesting another staff member.

[12:07:09 PM](#)

SENATOR DYSON asked if she said the high was 26 employees.

MS. LORD-JENKINS she said yes, and now it is eight.

SENATOR DYSON said one motivation for cutting back was that some legislators had "displeasure with some of your all's activities, which I think I deplore whatever it was that happened." He asked if there are standards as to what the ratio of staff to population ought to be.

MS. LORD-JENKINS said she is unaware of any national staffing recommendations. The work expands to fill the number of staff. She said the office had "gone underground for awhile because we had such a low number of staff." She said they began to do outreach to the rural areas of Alaska, sending posters out to libraries and public service organizations, which has increased the visibility of the office. She said they haven't done a full

court press because "we would be drowned" in the number of complaints received.

[12:09:30 PM](#)

SENATOR DYSON asked for guidance for legislators who get complaints on how to work with the ombudsmen office.

MS. LORD-JENKINS said she will provide that. She has an information sheet that is handed to all the new legislators.

CO-CHAIR STEVENS said the Alaska Ombudsman Act is considered a national model.

[12:11:18 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DAHLSTROM moved to nominate Linda Lord-Jenkins as ombudsman and to forward her appointment to both bodies for approval.

CO-CHAIR STEVENS heard no objections, and it was so ordered.

The Joint Ombudsmen Selection Committee was adjourned at [12:12PM](#).