

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**SEPTEMBER 26, 2024  
11:00 AM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson, Chair  
Representative Kevin McCabe, Vice Chair  
Senator Click Bishop  
Senator Matt Claman  
Senator Lyman Hoffman  
Senator Jesse Kiehl  
Senator Donny Olson  
Senator Gary Stevens  
Representative George Rauscher  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Cathy Tilton

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Bert Stedman (alternate)  
Representative Bryce Edgmon  
Representative Sara Hannan  
Representative Craig Johnson

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator David Wilson  
Representative Mike Cronk

**AGENDA**

APPROVAL OF AGENDA  
APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
CONTRACT APPROVALS  
EXECUTIVE SESSION  
COMMITTEE BUSINESS

**SPEAKER REGISTER**

Jessica Geary, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs  
Agency (LAA)  
JC Kestel, Procurement Officer, LAA  
Shay Wilson, Chief Information Officer, LAA  
John Wright, Manager, Print Shop, LAA  
Rayme Vinson, Chief of Security, LAA  
Emily Nauman, Director, Legal Services, LAA  
Mindy Kissner, Finance Manager, LAA

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

[11:04:13 AM](#)

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON called the Legislative Council meeting to order in the Anchorage Legislative Information Office Denali Room. Present at the call were: Senators Bishop, Claman, Hoffman, Kiehl, Olson, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Saddler, Tilton, McCabe.

Nine members present.

Senator Stevens joined at 11:05am.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON at 11:05am recognized Senator Wilson joined online and Representative Cronk in the audience.

## **II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

[11:05:27 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved and asked unanimous consent that Legislative Council approve the agenda as presented.

The motion passed without objection.

## **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

[11:05:42 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council approve the minutes for the August 14, 2024, meeting as presented.

The motion passed without objection.

## **IV. CONTRACT APPROVALS**

### **a. Kodiak Lease Extension Renewal No. 2**

[11:06:06 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that the Legislative Council approve Renewal No. 2 of the lease extension for Kodiak office space in an amount of \$70,396.44.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for the purpose of discussion and asked that JC Kestel, Procurement Officer, speak to this item.

JC KESTEL, Procurement Officer, LAA, stated that in the packet is a memorandum regarding a renewal of the lease extension for the Kodiak office space, currently occupied by Senator Stevens and Representative Stutes as well as a

Legislative Information Office. The current lease expires on October 31, 2024; Renewal No. 2 is for a one-year term and, if exercised, would leave three one-year renewal options remaining. This lease agreement exceeds fifty thousand dollars in one fiscal year; therefore, Legislative Council approval is required.

There was no further discussion. Chair Gray-Jackson removed her objection and asked for a roll call vote.

[11:07:45 AM](#)

YEAS: Senators Bishop, Claman, Hoffman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Saddler, Tilton, McCabe

NAYS: None

The motion passed 10-0.

**b. Meraki License Five Year Renewal**

[11:08:48 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council approve the five-year Meraki license renewal for \$72,604 from existing funds.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for purposes of discussion and asked Shay Wilson, Chief Information Officer, to speak to this item.

SHAY WILSON, Chief Information Officer, Legislative Affairs Agency, stated before the Council members was a memo regarding the Meraki 5-year licensing. Meraki are hardware devices that control internet access to our branch offices, including the LIO, Legislative Audit, OVR, and Ombudsman. These devices also provide security and wireless access at those locations. The total cost for the 5-year renewal is \$72,604 to be paid out of existing funds.

He continued that without this expenditure we would not be able to provide the wide area network that connects all of our separate locations together; we would not be able to provide wireless access at those locations; and we would lose some layers of internet security that protect the LIOS.

In response to a question from Representative Saddler about Meraki's performance to date and their ability to meet their responsibilities for the next five years, Mr. Wilson responded that Meraki is best of class for these services

and does a very good job; owned by Cisco, Meraki is a stable company that Mr. Wilson is confident will remain in business.

SENATOR OLSON followed up with a question regarding whether there have been any security concerns in the past with these devices. He further asked what locations these devices provide wireless access points for. Mr. Wilson clarified that these wireless access points were in outlying LIOs and legislative offices and that there haven't been security concerns specifically related to these devices.

There was no further discussion. Chair Gray-Jackson removed her objection and asked for a roll call vote.

YEAS: Senators Bishop, Claman, Hoffman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Saddler, Tilton, McCabe

NAYS: None

The motion passed 10-0.

#### **c. Purchase of Four Palo Alto 1410 Firewalls**

[11:13:59 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council approve the purchase of four Palo Alto 1410 firewalls for \$69,152 from existing funds.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for purposes of discussion and asked Shay Wilson, Chief Information Officer, to speak to this item.

SHAY WILSON, Chief Information Officer, LAA, stated that there was a memo in members packets regarding the purchase of four Palo Alto 1410 devices. These are firewall devices that will be installed to take the place of existing Palo Alto 3410 devices currently installed in Juneau and Anchorage. The replacement of the 3410 devices will drastically reduce the year after year licensing cost.

These Palo Alto 1410 firewall devices provide VPN access, firewall security, application identification and blocking, as well as malware and network traffic inspection. The purchase price of these devices is \$69,152 and are to be paid from existing capital funds.

There was no further discussion. Chair Gray-Jackson removed her objection and asked for a roll call vote.

[11:15:22 AM](#)

YEAS: Senators Bishop, Claman, Hoffman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Saddler, Tilton, McCabe.

NAYS: None

The motion passed 10-0.

**d. Print Shop Copier Add-On Request**

[11:15:56 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council authorize an increase of \$2,900 for a document scanner attachment for the new Print Shop copier from Boynton Office Systems by amending the total authorized purchase to an amount not to exceed \$93,411.75.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for purposes of discussion and asked John Wright, Print Shop Manager, to speak to this item.

JOHN WRIGHT, Print Shop Manager, LAA, stated he is speaking to the recent acquisition of the Canon copier the Council authorized in June. It was delivered and installed at the beginning of the month. Just prior to the delivery of the machine, the sales representative noticed that the machine as ordered did not include a scanning device, where in the past those have always come standard. Because of this oversight, the sales representative reduced the price by \$700, from \$3600 to \$2900. The Print Shop depends on the document scanner, especially during the legislative session.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE clarified that this is for the scanner that was approved two meetings ago because the printer we had aged completely out and printed its lifetime number of documents.

MR. WRIGHT confirmed that this was the case.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE recalled that this particular printer was the less expensive of the bids received and was curious if this would still be less expensive with the addition of the scanner.

MR. WRIGHT responded that this is still less expensive, and the other was a Xerox model which was priced at approximately \$160,000 and with the additional scanner puts this at just about \$93,000.

There was no further discussion. Chair Gray-Jackson asked for a roll call vote.

[11:19:54 AM](#)

YEAS: Senators Bishop, Claman, Hoffman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson Representatives Saddler, Tilton, McCabe

NAYS: None

The motion passed 10-0.

**V. EXECUTIVE SESSION**  
**a. Security Update**

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON said that Council would go into Executive Session to receive a security update and security staff salary review.

[11:20:39 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved and asked unanimous consent that the Legislative Council go into Executive Session under Uniform Rule 22(B)(4), discussion of a matter the public knowledge of which would adversely affect the security of the state or nation, or adversely affect the security of a governmental unit or agency and 22(B)(3), discussion of a matter that may, by law, be required to be confidential. The following individuals may remain in the room or online during Executive Session: Jessica Geary, Sante Lesh, Rayme Vinson, JC Kestel, Emily Nauman, Megan Wallace; Security Subcommittee members Matt Simpson and Michaela Bradner; any legislators not on Legislative Council, and any staff of Legislative Council or Security Subcommittee members.

[11:21:27 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken.

YEAS: Senators Bishop, Claman, Hoffman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson Representatives Saddler, Tilton, McCabe.

NAYS: None

The motion passed 10-0.

[11:22:01 AM](#)

Council went into Executive Session

[12:44:45 PM](#)

Council came out of Executive Session.

A roll call vote was taken to establish a quorum.

Present at the call were Senators Bishop, Claman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton, McCabe.

Ten members present.

**b. Security Staff Salary Review**

[12:45:34 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council approve the creation of a flex position Uniformed Armed Security Officer 1 through 3 and further moved that Legislative Council approve a permanent transfer of \$155,000 to Legislative Security Services as outlined in the memo and effective October 1, 2024.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for purposes of discussion. Recognizing the work of the Security Subcommittee on the topic, inviting Rayme Vinson, Chief of Security, LAA, and Jessica Geary, Executive Director, LAA, to provide an overview and speak the topic.

JESSICA GEARY, Executive Director, LAA, said this issue was brought before the Security Subcommittee to address the recruitment and retention challenges of the Security section. Their pay was not comparable to pay of other law enforcement agencies and similar work, for which many of Mr. Vinson's guards were leaving the Security section, that had a higher level of pay. This motion would allow for the creation of a flex position which created some movement within the range. The current Armed Security Officer starts at a range 16, this allows them to go up to a range 19 depending on prior training and certification.

Ms. Geary deferred further statements to Rayme Vinson, Chief of Security, LAA.

RAYME VINSON, Chief of Security, LAA, stated that this motion would bring the Security section of the LAA on par with other employees in the Juneau area and make the

section more competitive in bringing in competent qualified people. It also allows other applicants without prior law enforcement experience to be able to learn, gain experience, and continue in their career.

MS. GEARY stated the transfer would come from the Legislative Council Chair budget, the Senate Operating budget, and the House Operating budget, with a total of \$155,000 needed to increase these wages. This would be a permanent transfer from those allocations into the Security Services allocation.

SENATOR KIEHL commented his appreciation for the staff and the members of the subcommittee in bringing this issue forward. Further stating his support of this motion, emphasizing the importance of having effective security through placing a value on the pay, benefits, and training opportunities for prospective applicants.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER, asked for clarification on if this was going to establish an ongoing expense every year. Understanding this first appropriation is going to be coming from some lapsed money, what would the future funding source will be and is this going to require an increase in the total agency budget?

MS. GEARY stated that by identifying allocations with highest estimated lapse, any kind of increase to the legislature's budget can be avoided. Understanding that in the future, it's hard to know how sustainable that is but for now and the foreseeable future there isn't a need to increase the legislature's overall budget to accomplish this.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER followed up stating that he foresees the issue of a long-term funding source for this to be brought back before Legislative Council in the future. Noting that he supports this measure, but that there may be more work to come back to.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON commented that Ms. Geary and the committee staff proposed the funding sources with careful consideration after analyzing a 5-year average from the different divisions. She thanked Ms. Geary and staff for the creativity and intention in helping inform this motion as it takes into consideration what will be needed now as well as for the future.

There was no further discussion. Chair Gray-Jackson asked for a roll call vote.

12:50:08 PM

YEAS: Senators Bishop, Claman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton, McCabe

NAYS: None

The motion passed 10-0

## **VI. COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

### **a. Assembly Building Apartments Policy**

12:50:53 PM

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council adopt the Assembly Building Apartments Policy as amended.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for purposes of discussion, inviting Jessica Geary to speak to the topic.

JESSICA GEARY, Executive Director, LAA, stated that at the last Legislative Council meeting she gave a brief update on the first session of the Assembly Building Apartments (ABA), including some positive feedback and some policy changes that were being recommended in response to things that came up this past session. Ms. Geary referred members to a document titled Assembly Building Apartments Policy Summary of Changes found in their packet, noting there should be both a copy of the marked-up, red lined version showing the changes, as well as a clean version of the proposed updated policy.

MS. GEARY stated that the first change is simple: initially in drafting the policy, it was unclear how many Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliant units there would be, and this change confirms there are two (2) ADA units.

The next change pertains to the discovery that white linens may not be reusable session after session. The proposed change allows for tenants to choose previously used linens, to bring their own linens, or to purchase a new set of linens, a process comparable to many college dorms where a nominal fee is paid for provided linens. The current proposal is set at \$100, though the fee could be any amount to help offset the cost to replenish. Ms. Geary noted that "linens" are defined by anything that goes on or covers a bed, pillows, bathmats, and towels.

Another change adds language to clarify that furnishings cannot be removed or replaced without approval from the property manager in consultation with the LAA. It was discovered at the end of session that some tenants brought in furniture of their own and removed some provided furniture. Provided furniture is state property, which is tagged and in the LAA inventory system. This change ensures the LAA and property management can track state inventory while allowing flexibility for tenants' furniture preferences.

Ms. Geary said the next change is to clarify that a tenant must be an employee of the legislature to be able to rent at the ABA.

Ms. Geary outlined two changes in Section E. - Application, Prioritization, and Apartment Assignment. The first change adjusts the application window by two weeks and should allow more time for applicants to know whether they get an ABA unit, giving them time to seek another accommodation if necessary. The second change narrows the window for an applicant who is offered a unit to respond to property management, reducing it from 48 hours to 24 hours to accept or decline an offered unit.

The next item clarifies the prorating of rental rates language to allow for tenants to move in any time in January and occupy the unit through the end of May if there is no immediate special session.

Under interim rental and rates section, the proposed change removes the second session language to allow for legislator tenants to remain in place indefinitely which saves time and money.

Ms. Geary paused for questions or comments on this change and recognized Senator Claman who said he thinks it's a very good policy.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON announced that before moving onto comments, she would like to make an amendment to this policy and with discussion to follow.

12:55:30 PM

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON moved that the Assembly Building Apartments Policy as presented be amended to include language that says, "11 studio apartments will be designated for legislative staff."

DISCUSSION FOLLOWED between Chair Gray-Jackson, Senators Olson, Claman, Bishop, Kiehl, Speaker Tilton, Representative Saddler, Vice Chair McCabe and Director Geary regarding: number of ABA units and types of units (a mix of one bedrooms and studios); one purpose of the ABA as lodging for special sessions primarily for legislators; lack of affordable housing options for staff and the impact to staff recruitment/retention; the possibility of the Juneau Community Foundation purchasing additional housing to be owned by the legislature and the impact to the private sector; and concern that by setting aside ABA units for staff, it implied the legislature was responsible for providing staff housing.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON restated her motion to amend at Representative Saddler's request, and then asked for a roll call vote.

[1:09:13 PM](#)

YEAS: Senators Bishop, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson

NAYS: Senators Kiehl, Claman; Representatives Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton, McCabe

The motion failed 4-6.

[1:10:55 PM](#)

MS. GEARY continued through the remaining policy changes.

She detailed that the next set of changes adds key fobs to the list of accountable property, clarifies that parking spots are small and won't fit all vehicles, and changes the language to "may" for time zone limits and parking fines to allow for flexibility.

Ms. Geary said the next change added stronger language about vaping in the units. She noted the policy already forbids smoking and vaping but there was an apartment that clearly had vaping residue and required a lot of extra cleaning; this change clarifies that a tenant may be charged for additional cleaning related to vaping.

SENATOR KIEHL asked if would it make sense to say here "any evidence of vaping or **smoking** residue" since that also might require expensive additional cleaning.

MS. GEARY, in response to a question by Senator Claman, clarified that neither smoking nor vaping is currently

allowable; but because vaping is somewhat odorless it's easier to sneak it whereas if somebody were smoking in their apartment, they would set off a fire alarm and a whole host of other things. Vaping leaves a very sticky residue all over every surface so that was why smoking wasn't included in the updated language. She concluded a member could provide an amendment adding smoking if that was desired.

SENATOR KIEHL responded that he has no expertise in sneaking cigarettes into apartment buildings, but said he believes it might help to include smoking in case there is a need to recover costs from somebody who doesn't follow the rules.

MS. GEARY asked for a brief at ease.

[1:13:19 PM](#)

Council took a brief at-ease.

[1:13:56 PM](#)

Council returned from a brief at-ease.

[1:14:01 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL moved that Legislative Council amend the Assembly Building Apartments policy as presented to include on page 4 of the policy the words "or smoking" so the amended sentence would read: "any evidence of vaping or smoking residue."

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for purposes of discussion. Seeing no discussion or questions, she asked for a roll call vote.

SENATOR KIEHL, at the request of Senator Bishop, restated the motion.

A roll call vote was taken on Senator Kiehl's amendment.

[1:14:49 PM](#)

YEAS: Senators Claman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton, McCabe

NAYS: Senator Bishop

The motion passed 9-1.

[1:15:40 PM](#)

MS. GEARY continued, noting there were still a couple more items to mention. She said while the lease already states no open flames, she recommended adding the following language to the policy: "for your safety and for those in adjacent apartments no candles or open flames are permitted"; this change mirrors the lease language as previously mentioned.

She said the next items are to add "recycling" to the list of provided receptacles and to clarify that additional required cleaning costs may be deducted from security deposits. Finally, the very last item is language to notify tenants that Legislative Security will be adding cameras in the ABA parking garage.

MS. GEARY, in response to a question by Senator Bishop about the dollar amount or scale of the additional cleaning costs, said that a cleaning service is hired to ensure the unit is suitable for the next tenant with the intent to recoup that cost from the previous tenant. The dollar amount, or scale, depends on who's available to do the work. Additionally, she noted that a schedule of fees and fines is being developed with the property manager so tenants will know, as part of their lease agreement, of the potential charges for which they would be responsible based on the condition of the apartment at the end of the lease term; that schedule was missing this last session. In response to a follow-up from Senator Bishop, she confirmed that it would be a fee for service.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON, there being no further discussion, removed her objection and asked for a roll call vote.

[1:18:02 PM](#)

YEAS: Senators Bishop, Claman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton, McCabe

NAYS: None

The motion passed 10-0.

#### **b. Capitol Visitor Policy**

[1:18:37 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council adopt the Capitol Visitor Policy as presented.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for purposes of discussion and invited Jessica Geary and Emily Nauman, Director, Legislative Legal Services, to speak to the topic.

JESSICA GEARY, Executive Director, LAA, stated that the need for this policy was due to an incident that occurred this past session with some protestors who carried signs into the Capitol, held them up, and were somewhat disruptive during one of the committee hearings; and some of the behaviors caused concerns for Legislative Security Services, committee chairs, and the sergeant-t-arms. Approval of this policy would allow for there to be some guidelines on what types of signs members of the public can bring into the Capitol.

Ms. Geary said that the policy limits the size of any sign to no larger than 11x17 and which could not be affixed to a pole; signs would have to be a handheld. This policy doesn't contemplate what the sign could say, simply the size of the sign and the method of carrying the sign. It also authorizes Legislative Security to enforce a prohibition on signs blocking the view of security cameras. Another item this policy seeks to address are noise complaints about members of the public coming through the Capitol with a megaphone, being very loud and disruptive; this policy would prohibit any noise in the Capitol that disrupts legislative business. Ms. Geary concluded her summary of the proposed policy, stating she was available for questions and that Emily Nauman was also available for questions pertaining to any legal ramifications.

DISCUSSION FOLLOWED regarding the sign size limit of 11x17.

MS. GEARY, in response to a question by Senator Kiehl about what constitutes or defines a sign, asked for a brief at-ease to ensure she had a copy of the policy.

[1:22:32 PM](#)

Council took a brief at-ease.

[1:22:47 PM](#)

Council returned from brief at-ease.

[1:22:50 PM](#)

MS. GEARY cited the relevant section of the policy, which states that visitors may "...hand-carry a paper-based poster board or placard type sign up to 11x17 inches...[S]igns...must be handheld: no handles, sticks, supports, poles, posts, or other item may be used to hold up signs."

SENATOR KIEHL responded he was looking specifically at committee room restrictions, most of which are excellent and which state there cannot be signs or banners of any kind. He said he trusted that [in committee rooms] one could wear a button or a t-shirt, but wondered if one could paint something on the back of a jacket which could be taken off and held up; he didn't think that would be considered a sign. Senator Kiehl wanted to know the boundaries of this policy; that he thinks a policy like this is a good direction, but he needs to know what it means.

MS. GEARY responded that Senator Kiehl's question may be more within Ms. Nauman's area as Legislative Legal organized the policy flow. She went on to say it was her understanding the Signs section of the policy carried up into the Committee Room Restrictions section, so she didn't think there was a prohibition on holding up a jacket that has been made into a sign. If such an example did come up and Legislative Council wanted to address another change in policy, such language could be added, but it was not contemplated as the policy is currently written.

MS. GEARY, in response to a question by Representative Rauscher, said that any preference to include in the policy what types of language might be allowed was really a question of how much the First Amendment should be challenged; this policy, as presented, does not contemplate that. She noted that in early drafts of this policy there was a section prohibiting vulgar language on signs and that language was taken out; she said Ms. Nauman could speak more to this point.

EMILY NAUMAN, Legislative Legal Services Director, LAA, said that as Executive Director Geary stated, Legal Services reviewed the Visitor Policy for consistency with the First Amendment and, to be clear, there was generally no issue with the policy now, though there remains an issue with enforcement of the policy. She said that in terms of the First Amendment, the nut of the issue is that the government can prohibit conduct, but it has to be on a content neutral basis. For example, Legal Services removed the prohibition on vulgar language because it can be difficult to enforce that in a content neutral way. Another example of an area that will be difficult to enforce relates to the question of "what is a sign?". Ms. Nauman said she doubts Security was going to call Legal Services every time there was an issue to ask if a given situation

was contemplated in the policy. She believed the policy was clearly written which should allow for appropriate application of enforcement. She continued that she hoped Security, in enforcing this policy, considers what is disruptive as that was the line the courts have drawn in terms of the restrictions on conduct. She returned to the example of holding up a t-shirt or jacket to say that she hoped Security would consider whether the conduct was disruptive as far as answering the question of whether it counted as a sign in the policy's intent.

SENATOR CLAMAN commented on the question posed earlier by Senator Kiehl regarding sign dimensions that it was his understanding from Security Subcommittee discussions that the goal of specifying the dimensions was to allow signs but ensure they were not so large that they were a visual obstruction and safety concern.

SENATOR BISHOP, regarding Senator Kiehl's example of holding up a jacket, asked Ms. Nauman about legal standing if, in a similar situation, the chair of a committee called an at-ease or took a recess and called Security.

MS. NAUMAN responded that she would hope that the chair and Security would aim to interpret this policy toward disruptive behavior as that would be the most conservative approach. She said certainly what disrupts a committee is determined primarily by the chair and the committee members so they can proceed in their business. She said as we're all aware through other discussions in this committee that there is a balance between people being able to speak to their government in a way that's meaningful to them and be heard versus impeding the work of the legislature.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said he had general observations about this issue and commented that the First Amendment right to expression is not an absolute right, the classic example is that one cannot yell "fire" in a crowded theater; there has to be a public safety consideration. He said he agreed with Senator Claman's understanding and supports limiting signs in legislative hallways to avoid obstruction. He said people will push the limits of the policy by lining several 11x17 signs together to create 2-foot by 3-foot signs and enforcement will have to rely on discretion. He said there are many examples and anecdotes of people interfering with legislative business with noisemakers, shouting and chanting, and waving signs; he continued that we have an obligation to conduct the people's business without that kind of undue obstruction.

He said this is a very fraught issue. To the question of whether we should try and police the language of the signs - no, we cannot do that. There are many settled First Amendment cases that say people can put whatever vulgar, profane, insulting, demeaning, provocative thing they want and our job as legislators is to maintain decorum and continue with our business regardless of what people might say on their signs. He expressed concern about when difficult actors push these limits and asked what enforcement options are available; he wondered if Security would be present to determine what is disruptive. He said it will be difficult and anticipates that the policy may need to be refined in the future but does applaud the desire to maintain, through policy, some decorum for legislative business.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE remarked that he had some concerns about the policy taking away or limiting the ability of committee chairs to run their committees in accordance with what they see fit. He expressed that he would feel more comfortable if there was explicit language stating that nothing in the policy is intended to prevent committee chairs from managing their committees in their committee rooms the way they see fit.

MS. GEARY responded that there is language in the third paragraph of this draft policy stating, "nothing in this policy limits the authority of a presiding officer or chair of a committee to maintain order in a chamber or gallery during a floor session or a committee meeting." This does allow some discretion of the presiding officers and the committee chair.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE followed up to say he was hesitant that prohibiting signs in a committee room or asking a legislator not to wear a large button, as an example, qualifies as maintaining order. That seems more about noise and disruptions. In his perspective, it feels like this is limiting a committee chair's ability to run their committee as they see fit.

MS. NAUMAN, in response to the Chair's inquiry, said she did not have any additional thoughts or comments to Vice Chair McCabe's follow-up.

SENATOR BISHOP referred members to the third paragraph and the foot note of the policy, which is marked by an asterisk and cites Uniform Rule 3(c), stating that language should suffice regarding Vice Chair McCabe's concerns and then

reading the footnote, which states "...the chambers are subject to the rules set forth by the presiding officer and sergeant of arms." He looked to Ms. Nauman for confirmation.

MS. NAUMAN responded that she agreed with Senator Bishop's comment and interpretation.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER stated his support that Legislative Council go on record to say it was not the intent with this policy to limit a committee chair's authority to maintain decorum.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE said Uniform Rule 3(c) is pretty specific to the chambers, presiding officers, and sergeant-at-arms, which aren't in committee rooms. He said he expected that the committee chair would be able to limit what folks are wearing or doing. He said he agreed with Representative Saddler that there be disclaimer added to let committee chairs know they can run their committees the way they want to. He then requested a brief at-ease.

[1:35:35 PM](#)

Council took a brief at-ease.

[1:40:50 PM](#)

Council returned from brief at-ease.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON, addressing those on teleconference, said that a few committee members who were attending in person had to leave and asked that those on teleconference remain on the line if possible in order to maintain a quorum for at least the next vote.

SENATOR KIEHL began by expressing appreciation for Representative McCabe's concerns. He said the Visitor Policy can give non-partisan staff some help in managing disruptive behavior. He continued that he agreed with what Representative McCabe was saying about that third paragraph of the policy; this was not about the conduct of members in a committee meeting or the chair's ability to manage a committee meeting according to rules we've long had. He said he doesn't think this policy particularly impacts that. He said he appreciated Representative McCabe's commentary and thinks that the chair's ability to work with members and run the committee remains intact with this policy.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON called a brief at-ease.

[1:42:29 PM](#)

Council took a brief at-ease.

[1:43:08 PM](#)

Council returned from brief at-ease.

[1:43:09 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN moved that the Capitol Visitor Policy be amended in the third paragraph to add the words "manage or" so that the sentence would read "Nothing in this policy limits the authority of a presiding officer or a chair of a committee to manage or maintain order in a chamber or gallery during a floor session or a committee meeting."

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for the purpose of discussion. Seeing none, Chair Gray-Jackson asked for a vote on the amendment.

[1:43:37 PM](#)

YEAS: Senators Claman, Kiehl, Olson, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton, McCabe

NAYS: Senator Stevens

The motion passed 8-1.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON noted that the committee was now back to the main motion on the Capitol Visitor Policy. There being no further discussion, Chair Gray-Jackson asked for a roll call vote.

[1:44:23 PM](#)

YEAS: Senators Claman, Kiehl, Olson, Stevens, Gray-Jackson; Representatives Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton, McCabe

NAYS: none

The motion passed 9-0.

### **c. Social Media Policy**

[1:44:59 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON moved to table this item until next Legislative Council meeting on December 12, 2024.

There was no objection, and the item was tabled to the December 12 meeting.

**d. Continuity of Operations / Continuity of Government Plan**

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON noted for members that this item was discussion only and that no action would be taken today.

JESSICA GEARY, Executive Director, LAA, provided an update on the progress of the Continuity of Government plan for the legislature, which was first discussed at the last Legislative Council meeting. She said that on September 11 she met with the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management. This division is responsible for assisting with State of Alaska's Continuity of Government plan and agreed to provide templates to assist with the effort to craft a similar plan for the legislature. While there is still work to be done, she said feels confident now that we have this resource. She said further decisions will be brought back to the committee and that she simply wanted to provide an update on this task.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON thanked Ms. Geary and, seeing there were no questions from members, moved to the next agenda item.

**e. Allowance Account Policy**

[1:46:43 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON said this item was also for discussion only. She noted that LAA Finance Manager Mindy Kissner would review the changes that were made to the Allowance Account Policy in 2016 and then Representative Rauscher, who requested this topic be placed on the agenda, would share his thoughts.

MINDY KISSNER, Finance Manager, LAA, summarized that in 2016, as a budget saving measure, the House made the decision to reduce the House allowance account from \$16,000 to \$12,000. At the time, the Senate did not choose to make a reduction, and their allowance accounts remained at \$20,000.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON thanked Ms. Kissner and, there being no questions, turned the floor over to Representative Rauscher.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER began by saying that he sees some disparity between rural and urban legislators. He explained that Anchorage legislators can easily travel their district in an hour or so; however, rural legislators may need to

travel by plane, boat, or long drives, which can take days. While some office expenses, like supplies and mailings, are common across districts, rural legislators face unique costs due to the size and complexity of their districts, including attending meetings in remote areas and multiple cities or ports.

He said he has been considering this issue for the last year and, while the timing is debatable, he said he believes now might be right to address this issue. Referring to a handout he provided to members before speaking, he said he has been contemplating an idea to allocate 75% of the office allowance equally among all districts for shared needs, while the remaining 25% would be distributed proportionally based on district size and additional travel demands. This would better create equitable support to rural legislators, who often spend personal funds to reach constituents and attend key meetings, unlike their urban counterparts with easier access. Concluding that this idea isn't for immediate action but rather a starting point for discussion to ensure fairer support for all legislators.

1:54:00 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER expressed gratitude to Representative Rauscher for bringing this issue forward and recognized the thought and effort put into addressing the challenges of representing large districts in our state. He remarked that it's a creative idea that seems fair at first glance.

SENATE PRESIDENT STEVENS commented that it seemed best for the Senate to stay out of this discussion as the House voluntarily took that budget cut. He continued that it would, however, be good to know how those monies are used. He stated that he often didn't use all of his account and wondered if LAA could share how much of those funds are used by other members of the legislature.

MS. KISSNER stated that the funds are often used for mailings, constituent travel, and other routine items. She said that often the funds aren't fully used up each year and that the accounting section would be happy to compile any information that he or the committee is interested in.

SENATOR CLAMAN commented on the amount of the accounts and stated that they haven't been adjusted recently for inflation and it might be worth considering whether the

House should return to the \$16,000 level, as that could address some of the concerns that were highlighted.

SENATE PRESIDENT STEVENS commented that his only concern is whether most House legislators are using the full \$12,000 allowance and would be interested to see how close each district comes to fully utilizing that amount.

SPEAKER TILTON commented that she understood the unused funds roll back into the respective House or Senate funds, which may contribute to balances used for things like increased security funding. She shared that she does not know who uses their full allowance but understands that redistricting has created much larger districts, leading to higher costs for those legislators. She thanked Representative Rauscher for bringing this forward and said that it's well thought out.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON noted for those on teleconference that copies of what Representative Rauscher passed out here will be sent to them and will also be posted to BASIS.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE commented that in addition to responsibilities within the state, many committee chairs and legislators have out-of-state responsibilities, such as with PNWER (Pacific Northwest Economic Region), NCSL (National Council of State Legislatures), or CSG (Council of State Governments). Airline ticket prices have increased in the last six months - flights that used to cost \$500-600 to the Lower 48 now often exceed \$1,000. These expenses typically come out of office allowance accounts, so it's something the committee should consider reviewing as well.

SENATOR KIEHL stated that he appreciates the effort that was put into this discussion item and asked Representative Rauscher if he knew of a way to account for "cost of access". Offering that within his Senate district, travel often requires ferries or small planes, along with guaranteed overnight stays—unlike districts where one can drive to communities and return home the same day. He wondered if this particular issue could be addressed in the proposal.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER responded that he appreciates the comments and questions raised and continued that the goal was to figure out how to accommodate and understand these needs. He shared that some legislators may not use their full allowance, not because they don't need it, but because limited funds prevent them from taking certain trips, like

out-of-state opportunities to develop as legislators. He continued that districts like Representative Cronk's are incredibly large, making it unrealistic to expect those legislators to operate on the same budget as smaller, more accessible districts. He felt that addressing all their constituents, councils, and school districts on the same funding as others with more accessible districts is a significant challenge.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER said that regarding district size factor, some rural districts are on the road system with easier access, while others, like Districts 39 and 40, have few or no roads, making access significantly more expensive. He felt that a policy like this should remain somewhat general to avoid overly prescribed reimbursements, yet he felt the current system feels too imprecise. He applauded Representative Rauscher for his effort to visit constituents, often using personal funds, as he acknowledged many legislators do. He agreed that accommodating such expenses seems reasonable, and he restated appreciation for this proposal being brought forward for consideration.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON added her gratitude to Representative Rauscher for bringing this forward as an addition to the agenda for the day as it has been an exceptional learning opportunity provoking the desire to have more discussion on this topic in the future to better figure out the next steps in addressing this issue.

SPEAKER TILTON suggested conducting an analysis of office accounts, not by specific individuals, but generally to see how many legislators are using the full amount and whether the reduced House allowance is limiting some, especially in large districts like those of Representative Rauscher or Representative Cronk. Commenting that as a fiscal conservative and Speaker of the House, she carefully reviews additional travel fund requests to ensure effective use of legislative funds. Analyzing how much travel is being supplemented from the presiding officer's account could also provide insight. She appreciated Representative Rauscher bringing this forward and understood the concerns raised.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON thanked Speaker Tilton for her comments and called on Representative Saddler.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER provided an additional comment that it might be helpful to have data on the square footage of

each district from the Division of Elections or Community and Regional Affairs, which could provide insight into how adjustments in formula programs affect different districts. He encouraged gathering this information for reference as the committee continues this discussion.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON stated that she would like to see a five-year analysis, like the one done for funding security salaries, showing how much money from office accounts has lapsed in both the Senate and the House. With 20 senators and \$20,000 each annually, she wondered how much has gone unused over five years and thought the same analysis should be done for the House.

SENATE PRESIDENT STEVENS commented that this is a complex issue that requires careful consideration. That a Senate district accounts for two House districts, and differences need to be accounted for. He shared he was not sure how the original \$16,000 and \$20,000 figures were determined, but for larger districts like his, where flying is required, they need to find a fair approach that considers the differences between House and Senate districts.

MS. GEARY responded stating that the LAA could compile this information in whatever way the members would prefer to see it. They could work with the Legislative Council Chair's office to develop some materials that can be shared for consideration.

#### **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON asked if any members of the committee had any final comments and advised that the next Legislative Council meeting will be December 12, 2024. She continued that members should be aware that the Legislative Council could have one final meeting in 2025 on the last day of the interim if there is any outstanding business to complete before the start of the next legislative session. The Chair thanked members, LAA staff, LIO staff, and her staff for their contributions.

[2:09:42 PM](#)

With no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 2:09pm.