

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI REPRESENTATIVE CHRIS TUCK

14 December 2015

Alaska Legislative Council
Senator Gary Stevens – Chair
716 W. 4th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Members of the Alaska Legislative Council,

As you prepare to deliberate on the question of whether the legislature should maintain its lease for the Anchorage Legislative Information Office building on 4th Avenue in Anchorage, we urge you to consider all available options. As lawmakers prepare to discuss legislation in the coming months that could fundamentally reshape our state budget, a wider examination of the way the legislature funds its office space is perfectly appropriate.

With the state facing a third year of multi-billion dollar deficits, it would be fiscally responsible to sever the current Anchorage Legislative Information Office lease for space more suited to our financial situation. Our previous rental agreement called for \$680,000 annually to occupy the Legislative Information Office. We now pay \$4 million a year for that contract, on top of the already expensive upgrades.

One proposal currently under review is for the Alaska Legislature to rent a portion of the state-owned Atwood Building in Anchorage. At an expected cost of \$664,776 per year, this is financially preferable to continuing our current lease for the 4th Avenue building, which costs over \$4 million a year.

However, another option exists that will provide even more savings and better service to our constituents. We suggest the Council look into the feasibility of allowing legislators to rent office space in their home districts, with a limit of \$1,500 per month. With 21 Anchorage-based legislators, this comes to \$378,000 per year. This new option would save \$3.6 million per year from the current 4th Avenue building leases, and would be \$286,776 lower per year than the proposal to place legislative offices in the Atwood Building. We suggest the Legislative Council authorize renting a few rooms in the Atwood Building for meetings and other necessary legislative functions. This

arrangement will provide the most savings to the state, and benefit everyone: it brings us closer to our constituents; it expends state money in our respective districts, and it will save the state millions of dollars.

The Alaska Legislative Council faces a tough decision in the coming weeks as to the status of the Anchorage Legislative Information Office. Our duty is to the people of Alaska who overwhelmingly demand we seek creative and less expensive solutions to our current fiscal situation. We urge you to listen to those Alaskans and take advantage of this unique opportunity to slash millions from the state budget and bring the legislature closer to its constituents. We respectfully request you consider this option as a part of your final decision.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Wielechowski". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Bill" being more prominent than the last name.

Senator Bill Wielechowski

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Tuck". The signature is written in a bold, cursive style, with the first name "Chris" being larger and more stylized than the last name "Tuck".

Representative Chris Tuck