

State of Alaska FY2009 Governor's Operating Budget

Department of Law Opinions, Appeals and Ethics Component Budget Summary

Component: Opinions, Appeals and Ethics

Contribution to Department's Mission

The Opinions, Appeals and Ethics section provides specialized legal services and representation to state government on all legal opinions, civil appeals in state and federal court, all executive branch ethics, public finance matters, and Indian law.

Core Services

The Opinions, Appeals and Ethics section provides legal services and expertise to departments and agencies in a variety of areas requiring special expertise. Those areas include attorney general opinions on all subjects and appeals of civil cases in both state and federal court. The section serves all state departments, boards, and commissions on all Executive Branch Ethics Act matters. The section also provides advice and representation on specialized areas of the law including Indian law and the public records act.

The section was established in June 2003. Its primary functions are to improve the state's civil appellate work, improve the quality of attorney general opinions, provide more timely and comprehensive services on executive branch ethics for all of state government, and to provide specialized legal expertise in certain areas. The attorneys in the section evaluate and make recommendations to the attorney general and deputy attorney general on all civil appeals and petitions for review. The section also provides assistance with appellate briefing and case preparation, and handles appeals where the case presents significant constitutional issues or where matters of statewide implication are involved. The section handles all of the state's appellate cases concerning child abuse and neglect.

The section is responsible for attorney general opinions, and in carrying out that function it both prepares opinions on significant legal issues, and reviews and approves opinions generated by others in the department. As with the appellate function, the section's opinion function has improved the substance, quality, and consistency of the written legal advice issued by the department.

The section is assigned the Executive Branch Ethics function for state government. This focus has improved the timeliness and quality of ethics advice being rendered to all state agencies. An Assistant Attorney General in the section serves as the designated ethics supervisor for the Department of Law, and handles professional ethics issues involving both department staff and outside counsel. The section also is responsible for coordinating and assisting on Alaska Native and federal Indian law issues, both civil and criminal. The section also reviews briefs and makes recommendations to the attorney general on participation in United States Supreme Court cases as an *amicus* or "friend of the court."

FY2009 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results

FY2009 Component Budget: \$1,463,200	Personnel:	
	Full time	9
	Part time	0
	Total	9

Key Component Challenges

The Opinions, Appeals and Ethics section currently oversees the work of the civil division on over 100 active appeals pending in state and federal court. At any given time, the civil division has between 90 and 110 civil appeals pending,

about 25 of which are “Child-in-Need-of-Aid” (CINA) cases, involving child abuse and neglect. The section is currently handling all of the CINA appeals statewide. We also handle appeals in other cases that concern constitutional and legal issues of particular import. A key challenge for the section is to be involved in the briefing and preparation of all civil appeals.

The section also prepares or reviews Attorney General Opinions. A key challenge in this area has been to develop protocols to ensure the section is involved early in the opinion process so that the department can render timely and high quality advice to state agencies, which improves agency decision making. Section members developed a new department policy on opinions that will help the department issue higher quality opinions in a more timely manner. Ethics is another key challenge for the section. The section handles scores of ethics issues, investigations, opinions, and oral and written advice. These issues come up literally every day from all over state government. It is important that ethics advice be rendered promptly and in a consistent manner. Opinions and advice often require significant factual and legal research. The section also provides ethics training for state agencies. Better and more frequent training should reduce the number of ethics problems that arise and improve agency action and decision making on these issues.

Indian law issues continue to impact virtually every area of state government's responsibilities. The section is working to provide advice on a wide variety of issues including civil and criminal jurisdiction and authority, Indian gaming, waivers of sovereign immunity, Indian country, tribal status, the Indian Child Welfare Act, Public Law 280, and many more. We anticipate this area of law and legal services to be a continuing challenge for the section.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2009

The ethics attorneys have recently begun a training program for all other state executive branch departments and boards, and is developing an interactive training program for the Department of Law website. This effort will continue into 2009.

Major Component Accomplishments in 2007

The section evaluated and made recommendations to the attorney general on whether to appeal in 17 cases. The evaluations include careful review of the cases, consultation with the attorney and agency involved, preparation of memoranda analyzing the case and making a recommendation, and discussion with the attorney general and the deputy attorney general.

The section worked on appellate briefs in many cases, set up moot courts for 24 cases and participated in oral argument preparation in many of those, and provided consultation on appellate issues for the civil division.

The section prepared and issued several attorney general opinions and assisted with the preparation of many other opinions.

The section handled all of the court appeals in CINA cases.

The section provided legal advice on over 100 ethics issues, rendered several ethics opinions and memoranda of advise on topics such as outside employment, post-state employment, gifts, contracts, etc., investigated and resolved several ethics complaints, and is continuing work on several pending investigations and issues.

The section advised the Office of Management and Budget on issues concerning public finance and budget and prepared draft legislation on budget and finance issues.

The section worked on a wide variety of Indian law issues including the Indian Child Welfare Act, Indian gaming, sovereign immunity, and tribal jurisdiction in civil and criminal arenas.

Statutory and Regulatory Authority

No statutes and regulations.

Contact Information

Contact: Joanne Grace, Chief Assistant Attorney General

Phone: (907) 269-5100

Fax: (907) 279-2834

E-mail: joanne.grace@alaska.gov

**Opinions, Appeals and Ethics
Component Financial Summary**

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2007 Actuals	FY2008 Management Plan	FY2009 Governor
Non-Formula Program:			
Component Expenditures:			
71000 Personal Services	254.0	1,155.7	1,160.7
72000 Travel	17.5	33.6	33.6
73000 Services	37.5	217.4	217.4
74000 Commodities	4.5	32.0	32.0
75000 Capital Outlay	1.5	19.5	19.5
77000 Grants, Benefits	0.0	0.0	0.0
78000 Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0
Expenditure Totals	315.0	1,458.2	1,463.2
Funding Sources:			
1004 General Fund Receipts	208.0	1,039.6	1,040.9
1007 Inter-Agency Receipts	107.0	418.6	422.3
Funding Totals	315.0	1,458.2	1,463.2

Estimated Revenue Collections

Description	Master Revenue Account	FY2007 Actuals	FY2008 Management Plan	FY2009 Governor
Unrestricted Revenues				
None.		0.0	0.0	0.0
Unrestricted Total		0.0	0.0	0.0
Restricted Revenues				
Interagency Receipts	51015	107.0	418.6	422.3
Restricted Total		107.0	418.6	422.3
Total Estimated Revenues		107.0	418.6	422.3

**Summary of Component Budget Changes
From FY2008 Management Plan to FY2009 Governor**

All dollars shown in thousands

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2008 Management Plan	1,039.6	0.0	418.6	1,458.2
Adjustments which will continue current level of service:				
-FY 09 Health Insurance Increases for Exempt Employees	1.3	0.0	0.3	1.6
-FY 09 Bargaining Unit Contract Terms: General Government Unit	0.0	0.0	3.4	3.4
FY2009 Governor	1,040.9	0.0	422.3	1,463.2

**Opinions, Appeals and Ethics
Personal Services Information**

Authorized Positions		Personal Services Costs		
	<u>FY2008</u> <u>Management</u> <u>Plan</u>	<u>FY2009</u> <u>Governor</u>		
Full-time	9	9	Annual Salaries	832,848
Part-time	0	0	COLA	3,064
Nonpermanent	0	0	Premium Pay	0
			Annual Benefits	359,674
			<i>Less 2.92% Vacancy Factor</i>	<i>(34,886)</i>
			Lump Sum Premium Pay	0
Totals	9	9	Total Personal Services	1,160,700

Position Classification Summary

Job Class Title	Anchorage	Fairbanks	Juneau	Others	Total
Attorney IV	3	0	0	0	3
Attorney V	2	2	0	0	4
Attorney VI	1	0	0	0	1
Law Office Assistant I	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	7	2	0	0	9