



Impacts Expected to Department of Law if Partial Shutdown Occurs

June 1, 2015 (Anchorage, AK) – If a partial shutdown occurs, the Department of Law will see a reduction in staff in both the Civil and Criminal Divisions, resulting in a reduction in services on all criminal and civil matters. The department anticipates maintaining a skeleton crew to deal with civil matters, while trying to prioritize resources towards public safety and child protection.

"Like Governor Walker, I am still hopeful that the legislature will reach a budget deal that fully funds state operations for the next fiscal year," said Attorney General Craig Richards. "But considering July 1st is just around the corner, we have to begin preparing. For the Department of Law that means prioritizing what criminal laws we will be able to prosecute and what litigation can continue with minimal staff. For instance, prosecution of fishing and hunting violations will fall lower on the priority list and get less attention because resources will likely be needed elsewhere."

The Department of Law acts as the legal advisors and prosecutors for the State of Alaska. This means that any legal matters involving most state agencies are handled by attorneys in the department. In addition, the department handles all criminal matters for the State. This makes the impacts of a shutdown difficult to quantify because the department's workload greatly depends on actions of other departments, lawsuits brought against the State by outside parties, and schedules set by federal and state courts.

Based on current workloads and funding estimates, the department is likely to be impacted in the following ways:

- reduction in the prosecution of non-violent offenses based on available staffing levels;
- reduction in the prosecution of misdemeanors;
- inability to enforce environmental protection laws, such as enforcement relating to oil spills and water contamination;
- lack of representation in cases defending the State's rights and interests, such as cases in federal court relating to resource development; and

- inability to address consumer complaints and other consumer protection issues.

To ensure public health and safety are maintained to the maximum extent possible, the department's minimal resources will be put towards matters involving bodily harm or injury to adults or children and the health of our most vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and disabled. This meets Governor Walker's call to support critical life, health, and safety functions of state government. The department will also evaluate ongoing litigation and prioritize those matters that are most important to protecting the State's long-term interests and avoiding future liability. This evaluation will be ongoing and staff who are asked to stay on during a shutdown will need to remain flexible as priorities shift and unforeseen matters arise.

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