

Lee Cruise, dissenting

## State Officers Compensation Commission

[January 20, 2022]

The State Officers Compensation Commission met late last year with the task of reviewing the salaries of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Department Commissioners, and the State Legislature. While we came to a consensus on the first three, we were torn on what to do in regards to the State Legislature.

Our government is by design supposed to be of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is the job of our state legislatures to answer to the constituents they are supposed to represent. Over the past few years, the consensus among the public, both Democrat and Republican is that our representatives have failed to effectively do their jobs. The public believes one of the reasons for this is the inadvertent financial benefit the representatives get for not doing their job in a timely manner. Whether this is intentional or not is of no consequence because the financial benefit remains the same. Being a member of the state legislature is arguably one of the only jobs where the employee is financially rewarded for not only failing to get anything done, but also for taking more time to fail.

My conversations with the public deemed this failure of performance largely unacceptable. When you have a failure of performance in an employee you have disciplinary options you can use to correct the behavior of those poorly performing employees. The voters themselves can choose to fire their representatives and hire new ones. Our Commission could have reduced their compensation in an effort to change their ineffective behavior. The other members of our Commission instead chose to loosely hold our representatives accountable to the public. Reducing the per diem to \$100 a day and requiring receipts for reimbursement was a move in the right direction, however giving the representatives a \$13,600 dollar raise was very blatantly against the will of the public.

In my analysis the numbers show that at the legislatures current salary of \$50,400 was already 48% more than the national average. I took into consideration that Alaska was the largest state, and the third least populous state. No matter which way I looked at the numbers they all said we pay our representatives too much already. Under this new plan our representatives will now make more than the states average salary of \$60,888 and 88% more than the national average salary of state legislators. Alaska will go from the 12<sup>th</sup> highest to the 8<sup>th</sup> highest paying state for local representatives.

The argument I heard numerous times in a variety of ways was “we need to pay them more or they run the risk of being financially corrupt”. I find this argument to be a fallacy. The people of Alaska should never be financially extorted in order to prevent our representatives from being financially corrupt.

It is my belief that the other members of the Commission failed to listen to common sense, to the numbers, and most importantly to the people of Alaska. They instead chose to listen to the very representatives whose compensation we were to decide. We should always hold our representatives as equal to or lesser than that of the general public. To hold them higher than, is to treat them as if they are the very lords our nation waged a war to found itself against. I will always listen to what the people deem best for themselves, and in turn will always provide them a voice against those who would disagree. I respectfully dissent.