

Co-chairs Gorsek and Smith and members of the committee,

I write in strong support of increasing legislative budgets to allow for two full time staff, including one full time year round LA2.

I started as a Legislative Assistant 2 (LA2) at the beginning of the 2023 session, and have been fortunate to continue full time in the same office for the past two and a half years. Our office has been able to make this work by fundraising on the campaign side during the interim to pay for parts of my salary.

When I first began, my office primarily focused on housing policy because that is what my chief of staff and boss had the bandwidth for and knowledge around. By keeping me on and maintaining two staff during the interim, our office has been able to expand our policy areas, including into climate, which was a key tenant of what my boss campaigned on but had not had the capacity to delve fully into. While my chief of staff ran multiple housing and social policy workgroups over the interim, I was able to simultaneously run a workgroup on electrical transmission consisting of 80+ members that met over 18 months and resulted in 5 pieces of legislation. Because we had two staffers, our office was able to produce a handful of well thought out legislation that had robust stakeholder input-- something one staffer simply would not have had the bandwidth to do on their own. This is not to mention the workload that is helping constituents navigate complex state processes quickly, responding to constituent emails, and scheduling meetings, which our office was able to split between two staffers.

While continuing my role in the interim was incredibly beneficial to our office and to my own job and financial security, it still came at a price. Due to the restrained nature of our staff budgets, I had to be moved between varying levels of part time statuses at the state level, which were balanced by the campaign side to make it whole. While it was ensured that my pay remained the same regardless of the split, I have had to change health insurances three times over the past two and a half years. Additionally, despite working in the same PERS eligible position for the past 2.5 years, I have accumulated little PERS eligibility because I often do not meet the state hourly threshold, despite working 40 hours on legislative business.

As a full time year round LA2 funded partially through the campaign side, I can attest that there is more than enough work, and a second staffer only increases the productivity and effectiveness of legislation, and allows offices to better serve their constituents. Funding this role through the state allows for staffers to maintain the same benefits other employees doing similar jobs are given.

With respect,
Jessie Kochaver

**The above represents my views and not my bosses, and were written on my personal time, not using state resources.