

From the desk of Caleb Hayes

Testimony Delivered to the Ways & Means Subcommittee on General Government

Date: 5/1/25

Good morning, Co-Chairs Gorsek and Smith and members of the committee. My name is Caleb Hayes and I'm Chief of Staff for Rep. Zach Hudson and have served as a Chief of Staff to multiple legislators for over 5 years. I am testifying on behalf of myself and my colleagues in the staffing realm today.

As a Chief, I have cut my hours back—sometimes for nearly a year at a time and up to half my normal hours—to keep other staff on board. And even then, we could only keep them at reduced hours. They deserved to keep their jobs. And I would promote them if I could.

And, yes, I could run the office as recommended, firing and rehiring staff several months later, over and over again. But how is that fair to anyone, particularly the LA 2 who does an impressive job? What does it mean for constituent service and having any continuity in that area? How does it affect policy-making and agency oversight? I'll expand:

1. How is this fair for the LA 2 who does good work? It's not fair at all. And creates a dynamic where they always have to be looking for other work.
2. What does it mean for constituent service? It means less continuity and slower response times for constituents in need. Our LA 2, Spencer, has saved several constituents from eviction and other serious issues. Without him on board, I'm certain I wouldn't have the bandwidth to build relationships, follow up, and help them in the way he has.
3. On policy making and agency oversight... without a year round LA 2 I cannot assist my boss in these areas the way I should. Agencies put massive fiscal notes on our bills and we would like to provide closer oversight on the growth of agencies and their programs. Unfortunately, our current staffing budget makes this task impossible considering our other duties. Remember, LA 4s must take on LA 2 duties when no LA 2 is on staff. Moreover, some LA 2s are more than capable of taking on important policy work. I have seen it done. Without them, they cannot help in that regard either.

The state has many funding priorities this session. I understand that. However, this ask is for the legislative branch, which oversees agencies and their programmatic work. In other words, if we fund this ask, the legislature will have more capacity to hold agencies accountable and right-size their budget requests.

Funding year-round LA-2 staffing will lead to better constituent service, a fairer employment situation for us, and real government accountability that will save the state money.