

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE ETHICS  
Alaska State Legislature**

**THE ADVISOR**

**November 2006**

**Committee Members:** Chair H. Conner Thomas, Senator Ben Stevens, Senator Hollis French, Representative Max Gruenberg, Representative Bruce Weyhrauch, Dennis “Skip” Cook, Ann Rabinowitz, Gary J. Turner and Herman G. Walker Jr.

**Staff:** Joyce Anderson

**Office Hours:** Monday through Thursday

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**QUOTE OF THE MONTH:** “The purpose of ethics laws, first and foremost, lies in promoting both the reality and perceptions of integrity in government.”

Mark Davies quoted in *Government Ethics and Law Enforcement: Toward Global Guidelines* (2000).

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**COMMITTEE ISSUES ADVISORY OPINION 06-01**

“Can a legislative employee, on a regular basis, receive personal mail at the State Capitol through a ‘change of address’ form?”

On October 20, 2006 the ethics committee determined the following:

The chief purpose of the capitol mailroom is to process incoming and outgoing official mail for 60 legislators. In view of the important role that legislative employees play, and balancing the need for efficient operations of the capitol mailroom for legislators, the committee determined that “de minimis” personal use of capitol mailroom services by legislative employees is permitted under AS 24.60.030(a)(1)(A). “De minimis” means receipt of two to three pieces of personal mail per week or less. Submitting a ‘change of address’ card to the United States Post Office, for all personal mail to be

delivered to the State Capitol mailroom, is prohibited under the 'de minimis' exception.

For example, the receipt of an occasional package from Lands End, Ebay, or Amazon would be permitted, as well as the occasional letter. However, if personal mail starts to exceed the two to three pieces allowed per week, it is the responsibility of the legislative employee to notify the sender(s) to use an address other than the Capitol address for future mailings. Failure to do so in certain situations would result in a violation of the ethics code.

A copy of Advisory Opinion 06-01 is attached for your reference and is also available for review on the web site <http://www.legis.state.ak.us/ethics/>

Legislative employees may call Jan Price, Procurement Officer and Supervisor of Supply and the Mailroom, at 465-6705 if help is needed with determining options available for personal mail delivery while in Juneau.

## **ETHICS WORKSHOPS – SCHEDULED FOR 2007**

The ethics committee is excited to announce an Ethics Workshop will be held for legislators and legislative employees the first week of the 2007 legislative session. These workshops will be in addition to the regular ethics training conducted by staff the week prior to the beginning of the legislative session.

### **LEGISLATORS**

WHEN: Thursday, January 18, 2007

WHERE: Terry Miller Building, Gym

WHO: Michael Josephson, Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles CA

WHAT: Three-hour morning and afternoon sessions. The workshop will consist of a presentation and interactive sessions addressing core issues of preserving the public trust; i.e., using public office for personal gain, principles of accountability/transparency, conflicts of interests, avoiding appearances of impropriety and special challenges of following the spirit as well as the word of the law.

Mr. Josephson has a long history with the Alaska Legislature. He conducted an ethics workshop for legislators focusing on "Ethical Dimensions of Political Leadership" in 1988. He was subsequently hired by the Senate in 1990 to conduct an ethics opinion survey of legislators, nonlegislative public officials and lobbyists. Additionally, he reviewed current ethics laws and rules of the Alaska Legislature and recommended ethics legislation. Major changes to the ethics code were introduced in 1991 based on his recommendations. Mr.

Josephson testified before numerous Senate and House committees in 1991 and 1992. This ethics code is still in place today with a number of legislative changes made over the years.

Mr. Josephson will be contacting key legislators and the ethics committee chair for input prior to the workshop.

### **LEGISLATIVE EMPLOYEES**

**WHEN:** Friday, January 19, 2007

**WHERE:** Terry Miller Building, Gym

**WHO:** Peggy Kerns, Director, Center for Ethics in Government, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

**WHAT:** Three-hour session, one in the morning with a repeat of the session in the afternoon. The workshop will consist of a presentation with subsequent interactive sessions addressing ethical issues associated with legislative employee job duties.

Ms. Kerns helped establish the Center for Ethics in Government at the NCSL. She served in the Colorado House of Representatives for eight years and was House minority leader the last two years of her tenure. After leaving the legislature she was the deputy assistant secretary for intergovernmental affairs at the U.S. Department of Education. Previously she served on the Aurora (CO) City Council and is a former businesswoman.

Call the ethics office if you have issues you would like addressed at the workshop. Your calls are confidential.

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**IF YOU QUESTION AN ACTIVITY YOU ARE ABOUT TO PERFORM,  
CALL THE ETHICS OFFICE FOR CLARIFICATION**

**Remember, when it comes to ethics,  
what you don't know can hurt you!**

**Legislative Ethics Office**  
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**HAVE A HAPPY THANKSGIVING**