

November 20, 2025

Dear Municipality of Anchorage Salaries and Emoluments Commission,

As someone who has tracked the work of the Salaries and Emoluments Commission over the years, when I listened to the recording of the October meeting, I was disappointed by the casualness with which the Commission took up the issue of inflation-adjusting Assembly pay (and neglected to even consider a review for Mayor and School Board). It did not appear that any of the Commissioners did research on the topic prior to the meeting.

Given the numerous studies and articles (including a very public discussion about pay for Alaska Legislators) demonstrating that low pay for elected officials discourages parents, single people, young people and people of color from running for elected office, I would expect this Commission to be more engaged in researching the issue to make sure that Anchorage is setting rates of pay and benefits that encourage competitive races among qualified professionals.

One approach could be for the Commission to automatically meet annually to review the pay of Mayor, Assembly and School Board after completing the following research:

- Meet with the MOA and ASD Budget Directors to determine how salary increases could be incorporated into their budgets, and determine a plan for including regular inflation adjustments for salaries.
- Conduct at least a rudimentary salary survey of other elected officials (statewide and in comparable locations in the Lower 48), as well as the general Anchorage market of mid to senior level business professionals.
- Time the salary and benefits review cycle with the election schedules (for instance, if you change the Assembly salary amount in 2026, it won't go into effect until the next Assembly election in 2028, so you will need to have some padding to account for two-three additional years of inflation. If you want to adjust the Mayor's salary it needs to be done before elections in 2027, 2030, and so on).
- Review recent election results to learn more about the current competitiveness of races – the fact that several of the most recent Assembly races were not competitive (with only one candidate raising serious funding), suggests that the position is not currently desirable. Yes, pay is only one factor, but it is a significant one.
- Conduct a literature review of articles and studies on elected official pay to understand national trends and data.

- Conduct exit interviews with outgoing officials. Many Assembly members in recent years have left after only one or two terms - it would be helpful to learn more about the reason why they do not seek to continue in the position.

The pay and benefits should be reviewed regularly and updated with each election cycle to keep up with inflation (or if possible, be set on a formula that automatically adjusts for inflation) so that you do not once again get stuck in the position of having to make huge increases because ten years have gone by since the last adjustment. By putting this off for yet another year, you now make it even harder to achieve pay parity in the future. If small increases were made every few years, it would be easier to budget for.

Finally, it appears that several (a majority?) of this Commission are retirees who are not up to date with current pay practices. It would benefit the Commission to have more members who are currently working and aware of existing rates of pay in different industries. It also seemed that several members felt inconvenienced to have to meet again because they are out of town on travel for long periods. Most MOA boards and commissions meet 10-12 times a year. If a Salaries and Emoluments Commissioner can't be available to meet 1-3 times a year, perhaps they are not a good fit for this service.

I urge the Commission to develop updated practices and commit to a more serious, professional approach to your duties.

Sincerely,

A community member

CC Municipal Clerk Heinz
 Marie Husa, Boards and Commissions Coordinator