



Anchorage Municipal

OMBUDSMAN

Serving the Public Since 1977

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AUGUST 13, 2026

Annual Report 2025



Dedication

We gratefully dedicate our 2025 Annual Report to two remarkable women whose public careers have exemplified integrity, honesty, ethical leadership, and dedicated public service.

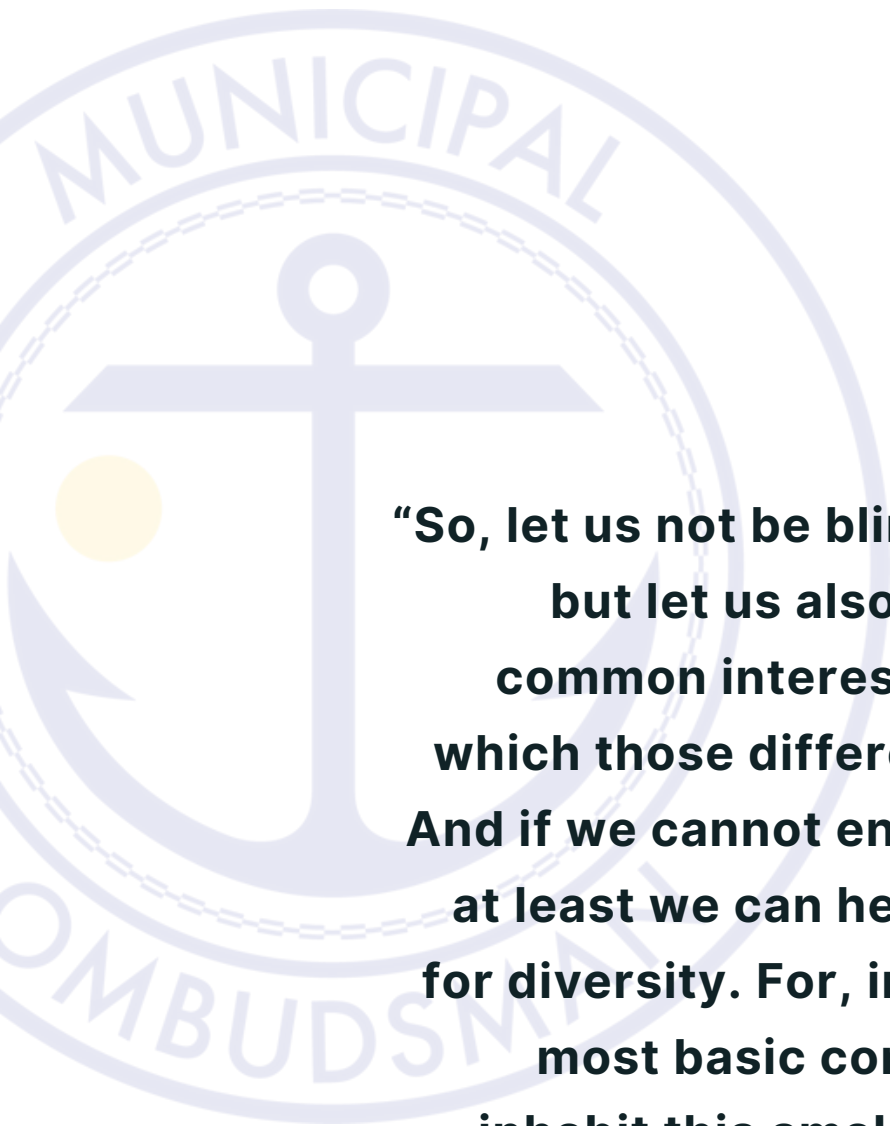
Barbara Jones, who served as Staff Attorney and Executive Director of the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission, Anchorage Ombudsman, Anchorage Municipal Clerk, and Deputy Chief of Staff for Mayor Suzanne LaFrance.

Jamie Heinz, who has served as Anchorage's Business License Official, Anchorage Deputy Clerk for Elections, Anchorage Election Administrator, City Clerk for the City of Kenai, and who currently serves as Anchorage Municipal Clerk.

We greatly appreciate your guidance, support, and friendship. Your dedication to public service has left a lasting impact on the Municipality of Anchorage and has inspired all who have had the privilege of working with you.

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**“So, let us not be blind to our differences—
but let us also direct attention to our
common interests and to the means by
which those differences can be resolved.
And if we cannot end now our differences,
at least we can help make the world safe
for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our
most basic common link is that we all
inhabit this small planet. We all breathe
the same air. We all cherish our children's
future. And we are all mortal.”**

- John F. Kennedy

AUGUST 13, 2026

To the Anchorage Municipal Assembly, the Anchorage School District (ASD) Board of Education, the Mayor and administration, and the people of Anchorage:

We are pleased to present the 2025 Annual Report for the Office of the Ombudsman. This report outlines our work as an independent, impartial office providing information about municipal government and investigating complaints involving municipal departments, agencies, utilities, employees, and the Anchorage School District.

In 2025, the office carried over 11 cases from the prior year, opened 224 new cases, and closed 229 cases, ending the year with 6 cases remaining open. We recorded 431 contacts and made 640 referrals, each reflecting an individual filing a grievance, seeking information, or looking for assistance navigating municipal systems.

This year, our office experienced some important staffing changes. Heather MacAlpine moved into a Deputy Ombudsman role and we welcomed Drew Ford, who also serves as a Deputy Ombudsman. Their experience and dedication strengthen our office's capacity to serve the public.

We have also renewed our commitment to understanding how we fulfill our mandate under AMC 2.60. This includes updating internal processes, refining our approach to Ombudsman work, pursuing targeted training and staff development, and taking a deeper look at how municipal policy and code affects the daily lives of Anchorage's residents and municipal employees. This work can be difficult and requires striving to promote fairness, transparency, and accountability.

We remain committed to serving, informing, and empowering the people of Anchorage.

Sincerely,

The Office of the Municipal Ombudsman



Darrel W. Hess
Ombudsman



Heather MacAlpine
Deputy Ombudsman



Drew Ford
Deputy Ombudsman

Our Team



Darrel Hess

Ombudsman

The Office of the Municipal Ombudsman is led by Darrel Hess who has served as Anchorage's Ombudsman since 2012 and brings more than two decades of public service experience. A long-time advocate for fairness and equity, he guides the office's mission with a focus on justice, fairness, and accountability.



Heather MacAlpine

Deputy Ombudsman

Deputy Ombudsman Heather MacAlpine brings years of experience in investigative work, a paralegal background, and prior service as Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity. She brings a commitment to justice and community, shown in her involvement with Keys to Life, a non-profit promoting healing through music and the arts.



Drew Ford

Deputy Ombudsman

Deputy Ombudsman Drew Ford joined the office in 2025 and brings a broad background in non-profits, education, legislative work, and community engagement. His diverse experience and dedication to protecting individual rights and improving government accountability support the office's mission and its service to the people of Anchorage.

Our Mission

To impartially promote fairness, transparency, and accountability between the local government and constituents.

Our Vision

We imagine a city government built on trust, connection, and integrity, where accessibility and communication drive innovation and solutions.

Our Purpose

(AMC 2.60.010)

The municipality hereby establishes, in addition to other remedies or rights of appeal, an independent, impartial municipal office, readily available to the public, responsible to the assembly, empowered to investigate the acts of administrative agencies and to recommend appropriate changes toward the goals of safeguarding the rights of persons and of promoting higher standards of competency, efficiency and equity in the provision of municipal services.

Translating AMC 2.60: Demystifying the Ombuds Office

by Deputy Ombudsman Drew Ford

The term Ombudsman is uncommon, unusual, and difficult to explain in everyday conversation. It is also not (yet) a role that fits neatly into traditional government structures. Despite this, the work is both essential and deeply practical. With a mission to impartially promote fairness, accountability, and transparency in local government, the Municipal Ombudsman's office advocates for higher standards of competency, efficiency, and equity in the provision of municipal services.

But what does this look like in everyday practice? While AMC 2.60 defines the authority and responsibilities of the Municipal Ombudsman, understanding the daily operations, decision making, and services provided is equally important.

In recent years, the Ombudsman has become known for being the Municipality's "navigation center"—a bridge in the communication between constituents and the agencies serving them. When people aren't sure where to begin, who to call, or feel stuck in the system, they come to the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman Office also investigates, makes recommendations, and offers guidance to officials. In this work, the office

raises questions, seeks informal complaint resolution, and actively promotes public accountability.

The Ombudsman profession is evolving. So too is the Municipality of Anchorage. The Municipal Ombuds Office is adapting to meet emerging needs and trends prompting the office to ask: How do we carry out our mission in today's environment? Are we having the impact we think we are? Are we clearly communicating who we are, what we do, and why our role matters?

The goal is to make the purpose, value, and work of the Municipal Ombudsman clearer and more accessible.

Defining Anchorage Ombuds Work

Most Ombudsman work starts with a complaint intake. When received, a complaint is triaged, then defined and tracked using three categories: *contacts*, *referrals*, and *cases*.

Contacts are essentially conversations. A complainant may need information, help understanding city code, clarity on policy or process, or simply someone to listen. Many contacts are the result of concerns outside the jurisdiction of the office, including civil, personal, or private issues. When the complainant understands the jurisdictional limits of the Ombudsman,

they often choose not to pursue further help from the Ombudsman.

Referrals can be straightforward, such as connecting someone with the appropriate department, service, or external organization. They can also be complex as Municipal problems are often multifaceted, involving several agencies with overlapping responsibilities. These referrals may require staff to determine the scope of a complaint, identify who has already been involved, assess what has been done, and coordinate an effective pathway forward. Even though these may not be cases or investigations, they frequently require significant research and problem-solving.

Cases include informal resolutions as well as investigations. They are one of the most recognized parts of our work, though often misunderstood. A case can be informally resolved at any point before reaching a Formal Investigative Report which is sent to the assembly. The general steps are straightforward—intake, discovery, analysis, recommendations, and reporting—and happen in conjunction with working directly with departments to resolve an issue. Cases can range from a single phone call to a complex investigation with interviews, records requests, code and policy review, and coordination with legal, risk management, or other agencies. This office has a strong history of success collaborating across all departments and

with the Anchorage School District and wants employees to know they are seen as essential partners in resolving complaints.

Many complainants assume that once the Ombudsman investigates, we can “fix” their problem. Ombudsman authority is limited to investigating and recommending changes; there is no enforcement power of code, policy, or even investigative findings.

Some complainants also assume that the office advocates for individuals. Advocating for a specific person falls outside the Ombudsman’s mandate and conflicts with the impartial role. The Ombudsman is authorized to advocate for more equitable and efficient outcomes, and that often looks like advocating for an individual. To accomplish this, the Ombudsman asks questions, starts conversations, requests information and makes recommendations. These steps help constituents better advocate for themselves by clarifying processes and systems and asking agencies to provide services fairly and consistently.

Finally, once a matter enters legal proceedings, the Ombudsman cannot participate and declines to open or continue investigations once a complaint goes to the court system.

Complaint Workflow

The Ombuds Office strives to assist all complainants, including those with non-jurisdictional complaints, however, formal case work is limited to jurisdictional complaints. All complaints are confidential unless investigating requires disclosure of a complainant's identity. Then permission must be obtained before proceeding. By law, complaints are addressed in the order they are received, though the office may prioritize those that are time-sensitive. To illustrate how complaints are managed, the following flowchart and word-bank were created.

Intake: Receiving a complaint by email, telephone, walk-in, office complaint form, fax, or other written communication. (Complaints typically must come directly from the individual and cannot be anonymous or submitted through a representative or proxy.)

Triage: Determining the nature of an issue, identifying what has or has not been done, establishing who is involved, and assessing whether the matter falls within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, then classifying the matter as a contact, referral, or case. (Often requires research to determine the appropriate course of action.)

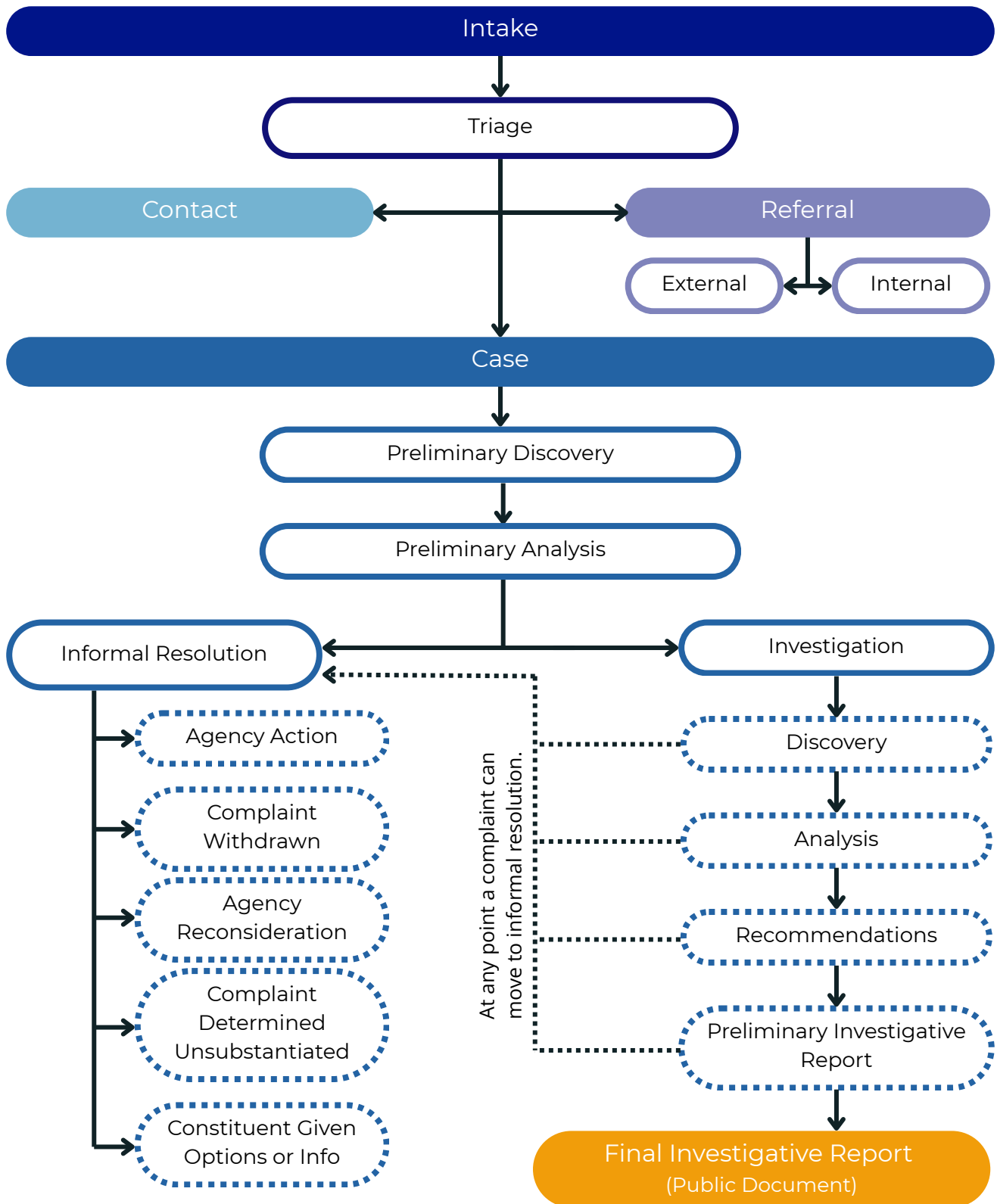
Contact: Communicating with a complainant at the lowest level of casework by providing information, answering questions, or offering informal guidance, or closing the matter without opening a case when appropriate, such as when a complainant withdraws a complaint.

Referral: Connecting complainants to the appropriate person, department, or agency; includes directing complainants to municipal departments when the agency has not yet had an opportunity to address the issue (Internal Referral) or to non-municipal entities, such as state or federal agencies or nonprofit organizations (External Referral).

Case: Conducting fact-finding, communicating with municipal agencies, reviewing relevant information, facilitating informal resolution when possible, and more.

Informal Resolution: Closing a case after a complainant receives the needed assistance, an agency takes corrective action, circumstances change, a complaint is withdrawn, the issue is determined to be unsubstantiated, or other remedies have occurred.

Final Investigative Report: Summarizing an investigation by documenting findings and recommending improvements to municipal services; includes issuing a preliminary report for agency review before submitting a final public report to the Assembly.



Beyond Complaints: The Impact of Our Work

by Ombudsman Darrel Hess

A History of Independence

As the Ombudsman's Office approaches its 50th anniversary in 2027, we reflect on the history that shapes our work and how it drives the future of this unique and often misunderstood institution. The framers of our Home Rule Charter showed amazing foresight when they put in the Charter's Bill of Rights the Municipality was required to provide constituents the service of an Ombudsman. In doing so, Anchorage became one of the first cities in the nation to have an Ombudsman.

Although the Municipality unified in 1975, establishing the Ombudsman's Office took months to agree on. The effort involved a highly public and contentious debate, with several versions of the enabling ordinance introduced, amended, and vetoed. Concerns at the time focused largely on whether the proposed office—especially with subpoena authority—held too much power, prompting then Mayor George Sullivan to accuse the Assembly of creating a “super Ombudsman.” After repeated vetoes, the Assembly enacted and defended AO 77-94, formally creating this office on February 22, 1977. This milestone also marked the first successful override of a mayoral veto in the

new Municipality's history.

This early conflict underscores an enduring reality of government: the natural tension between branches, specifically the legislative and executive branches. The Ombudsman occupies a unique position within that space, serving as an independent, impartial, and accessible resource for Anchorage residents and helping bridge institutional divides.

Beyond Complaints

Many people who know our office think of us as “the complaint office,” often because municipal officials or departments send constituents our way when conflict arises. But our work goes well beyond resolving individual complaints. Behind the scenes, we carry out the mandate in AMC 2.60.010: *“to recommend appropriate changes toward the goals of safeguarding the rights of persons and of promoting higher standards of competency, efficiency, and equity in the provision of municipal services.”* While the word equity can spark debate today, it has been part of our charge for nearly 50 years and remains a guiding principle of our work.

A History of Revising Code & Policies

During my tenure as Ombudsman, our team has helped to facilitate numerous rewrites of Anchorage Municipal Code. We have led

or been consulted regarding revisions to the towing codes, community council code, occupancy and housing standards code, and more. As part of those efforts, we looked at existing code through an Ombudsman lens to determine how laws and policy could be more responsive, fairer and more equitable, and more efficient for the residents of Anchorage.

Equity in Land Use Actions

In the past, the municipality mailed notices of major projects and land use applications only to property owners. The Ombuds office recommended that these notices should be required to go to renters as well. In certain neighborhoods, namely Mountain View and Fairview where up to 80% of residents are renters, only mailing notices to property owners excluded most residents in the neighborhood from having a say in the look, feel, and future of their neighborhood. The municipality was sending a message to renters that they did not matter as much as property owners. Our office found that to be inequitable and unfair. The departments agreed to our recommendation, which ultimately resulted in a code change that still affects how we communicate with constituents about land use applications and projects.

Improving Code Enforcement

Years ago, our office was involved with

recommending that Land Use Enforcement provide notices of violation not just to property owners, but also to renters accused of a code violation. Renters were not being notified or given the opportunity to respond to these accusations, which was a problem since most lease agreements allow for a landlord to evict a renter when state or local law is broken. This was another example of the municipality sending the wrong message to renters. The department agreed to our recommendation and changed their policy so that now both property owners and renters are provided notice.

Easy Parking for ALL

In 2012, our office received a complaint regarding an elderly gentleman who forgot to display his handicapped parking placard. He drove downtown, paid to park, but forgot to hang the placard from the rearview mirror. Upon receiving the inevitable ticket, the constituent tried to explain the mistake but Easy Park told him there was nothing that could be done, that the offense was not correctable. When our office investigated, we found that numerous tickets were correctable, such as burned-out headlights, tinted windows, noisy vehicles, and no proof of insurance, but forgetting to display a handicapped placard that had been issued by the State of Alaska was not correctable. We found the constituent's complaint justified and

recommended that the parking code be revised to make \$250 handicap parking offenses correctable. The Assembly acted on our recommendation and amended the code to make the process more equitable.

Extenuating Circumstances in Tax Collection

An elderly constituent had passed away out of state before she was able to pay the second half of her property taxes. By the time her executor obtained control of her finances, the taxes were late and the municipality charged a 10% late penalty. During our investigation, we discovered that the federal government had waived penalties and interest on the estate, but municipal code did not provide any appeal process for the late payment penalty. Our office found this unreasonable and recommended that municipal code be revised to allow for waivers of late payment penalties under exceptional circumstances. Treasury vehemently disagreed with our recommendation and the Treasurer at the time stated the individual who died should have known they were dying and arranged to pay their taxes. Our office had to advocate for 3 years to get the code changed so that this type of extenuating circumstance could be fairly and efficiently addressed in the future. The Assembly ultimately agreed with our recommendation and revised the code to allow for an appeal process.

The Future of Ombudsman Work

The vision for the Ombudsman Office is “a government built on trust, connection, and integrity, where accessibility and communication drive innovation and solutions.” As we continue to examine the way we conduct our work, we frequently reference these case studies to remind us that our efforts have made the municipal government more fair, more equitable, more common sense, and more in line with this vision.

While investigating complaints is an important part of our work, our most meaningful and impactful work often flies under the radar. In fulfilling our mission, vision, and purpose, we often act as the conscience of the municipality. As we look to the future of our office, we have come to realize that there is a need for proactive action, and we are interested in finding opportunities to improve the systems, the policies, and services that make up the Municipality of Anchorage.

“People and their differences make up the foundation of an organization’s ability to develop broad perspectives and to approach business problems in new and creative ways.”

- Barbara Walker



“Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it.”

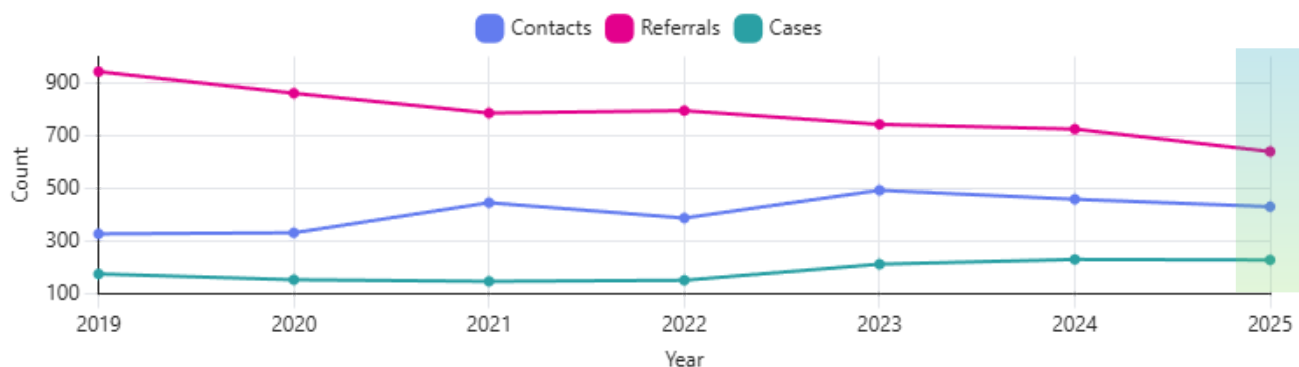
- William Penn

Our Data

The 2025 Annual Report has expanded its data review to include seven years of data, along with January 1 - July 17, 2026. The goal is to give Assembly members a view of long-term patterns to more easily draw conclusions and ask informed questions. Presenting more data year-over-year highlights gradual trends and patterns—for example, referrals seem to have declined slightly over time while case numbers seem to have increased. All data is pulled from the office case management software, CityView.

Total Annual Complaint Numbers

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 (1/1 - 7/17)
Contacts	328	332	446	388	493	459	431	205
%	22.64%	24.68%	32.27%	28.98%	34.05%	32.39%	33.28%	28.43%
Referrals	943	861	786	795	743	725	640	366
%	65.08%	64.01%	56.87%	59.37%	51.31%	51.16%	49.42%	50.76%
Cases	178	152	150	156	212	233	224	153
%	12.28%	11.30%	10.85%	11.65%	14.64%	16.44%	17.30%	21.22%
Total	1449	1345	1382	1339	1448	1417	1295	721



Cases = cases opened in a calendar year. Some carry over to a new year but only count in the year opened.

Annual Case Counts by Department

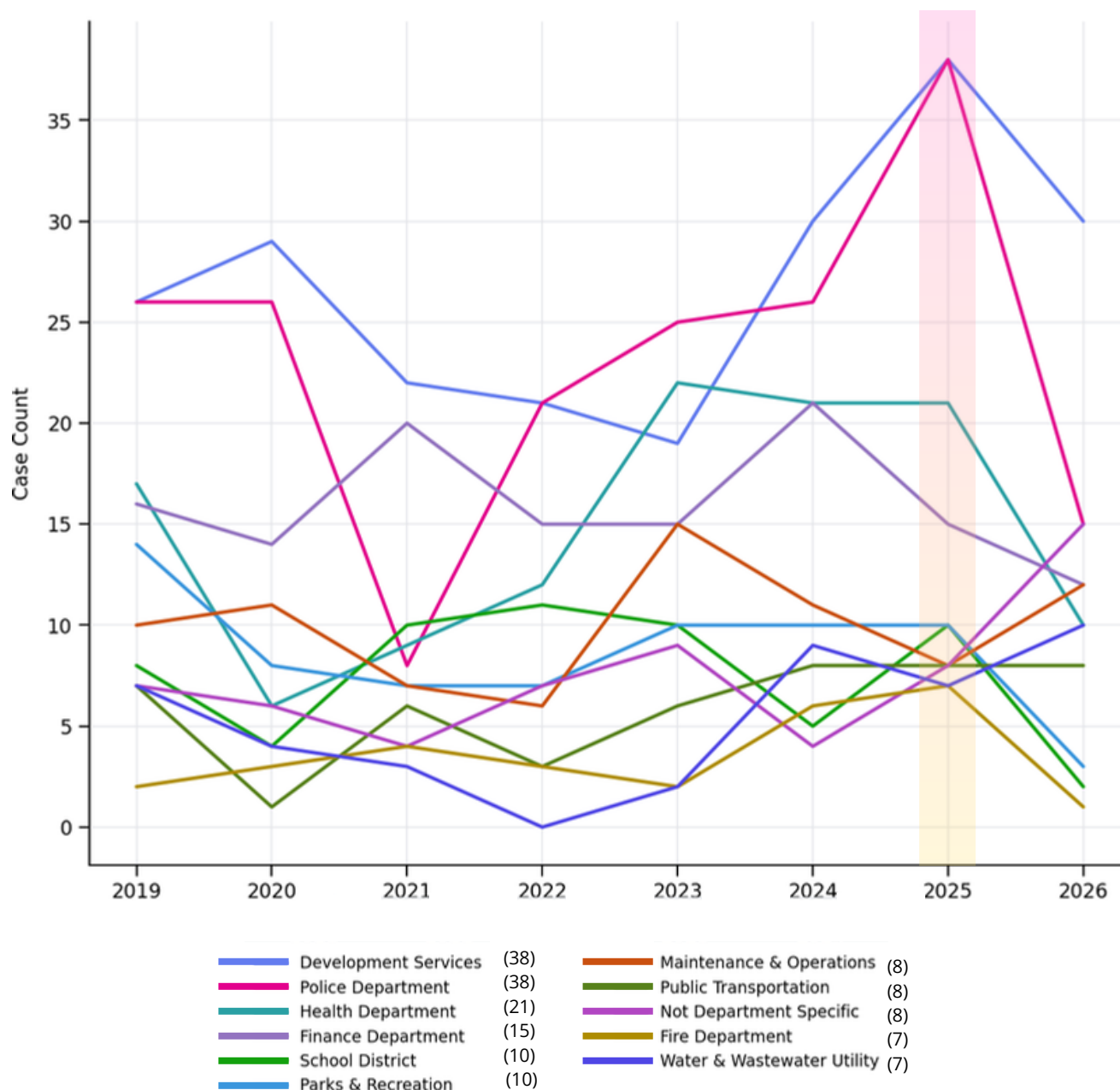
(2026 Data is January 1 - July 17)

Department	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
ACDA	3	2	2	3	7	2	6	5
Assembly	4	9	12	4	5	7	3	3
Development Services	26	29	22	21	19	30	38	30
Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
Emergency Management	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Equal Rights Commission	0	1	0	0	2	4	3	0
Finance Department	16	14	20	15	15	21	15	12
Fire Department	2	3	4	3	2	6	7	1
Girdwood Board of Supervisors	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0
Health Department	17	6	9	12	22	21	21	10
Human Resources	6	5	3	0	11	10	4	2
Information Technology	1	1	0	0	4	1	0	0
Internal Audit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Legal Department	1	1	0	2	4	9	3	1
Library	0	0	3	5	4	2	2	1
Maintenance & Operations	10	11	7	6	15	11	8	12
Mayor's Office	2	8	4	6	9	4	6	3
Merrill Field	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Municipal Light & Power	5	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Municipal Manager	0	0	3	1	1	3	1	1
Not Department Specific	7	6	4	7	9	4	8	15
Office of Equity & Inclusion	NA	NA	NA	2	1	1	1	0
Office of Federal Compliance / OEO	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Office of Management & Budget	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Parks & Recreation	14	8	7	7	10	10	10	3
Planning	3	1	4	5	4	4	0	2
Planning, Development, & Public Works	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	2
Police & Fire Retirement System	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Police Department	26	26	8	21	25	26	38	15
Port of Alaska	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Project Management & Engineering	0	2	0	1	1	0	3	0
Public Transportation	7	1	6	3	6	8	8	8
Public Works Administration	0	2	2	1	2	1	2	4
Purchasing Department	1	0	3	3	5	3	0	0
Real Estate Department	0	0	1	4	3	3	2	1
Risk Management	3	2	3	2	6	17	5	1
School District	8	4	10	11	10	5	10	2
Solid Waste Services	2	3	2	5	3	4	3	3
Traffic Engineering	3	1	3	0	2	1	3	1
Transportation Inspection	3	0	1	0	0	1	2	1
Water & Wastewater Utility	7	4	3	0	2	9	7	10
Total	178	152	150	156	212	233	224	153

Cases = cases opened in a calendar year. Some carry over to a new year but only count in the year opened.

Annual Case Counts for Top Departments in 2025

Highlighting the 11 departments with the highest number of cases from 2025 allows Assembly Members to see where our office spends the most time. Cases are the most time-intensive type of complaint meaning they inform workload not the total number of complaints received for a department. The chart includes 11 departments rather than 10 because there was a tie for the tenth-highest number of new cases opened in 2025.



Cases = cases opened in a calendar year. Some carry over to a new year but only count in the year opened.

Cases by District

In 2026 the office will phase out reporting case counts by Assembly district. This information will still be tracked internally, however it isn't useful for analysis. This is due to a significant portion of complaints coming from individuals not wishing to provide a name, contact info, or address. Thus, the majority of all complaints are geographically categorized as district unknown, not specific, out of Anchorage, or in District 1. The inconsistency in data collection makes this data set unhelpful in understanding the broader picture of Municipal Ombuds work.

Assembly District	2023	2024	2025
Not Specific	0	2	2
District 1	77	70	62
District 2	17	9	11
District 3	26	28	17
District 4	19	25	40
District 5	16	19	23
District 6	18	25	20
Out of Anc	3	5	6
Unknown	36	50	43
Total	212	233	224

Data Metrics

The Ombudsman Office uses CityView to track complaints and manage case work. The system works well for managing investigations and day-to-day operations, however it currently does not provide deeper, topic-level data to help identify trends or patterns in Ombudsman complaints; data that could help make more informed recommendations on broader systemic concerns. CityView tracks the number of complaints and the number of cases in each department—anything more detailed comes from staff observations.

Looking forward, this office hopes to make more effective use of CityView and explore ways to gather more meaningful data. The IT Department has staff specifically assigned to Ombudsman Office CityView maintenance and has already worked with the office to improve aspects of the case management system. Over the next year, we hope to collaborate more closely to see what improvements are possible while still protecting confidentiality.

**“It takes a great deal of
courage to stand alone
even if you believe in
something very strongly.”**

**- Reginald Rose,
Twelve Angry Men**

“This world isn’t fair, Calvin.”

**“I know dad, but why isn’t it
ever unfair in my favor?”**

**- Bil Watterson,
The Essential Calvin and
Hobbes: A Calvin and
Hobbes Treasury**

Case Studies

For the 2025 Annual Report, Ombudsman staff have selected four prominent cases and provided an organized look into how they approach investigations and write reports. Of note, all Final Investigative Reports will now include an *Investigative Mandate* shown below. This addition helps our efforts to strengthen and refine our investigative approach and to foster a culture that values constructive dialogue.



Investigative Mandate

In accordance with the mandate in AMC 2.60 to remain readily available to the public, responsible to the Assembly, and empowered to investigate and recommend appropriate changes or actions toward safeguarding the rights of our constituents, and toward the goal of promoting higher standards of competency, efficiency, and equity in the provision of municipal services, the Municipal Ombudsman's Office looks beyond addressing individual complaints and is equally focused on identifying and rectifying systemic issues that impact the quality and fairness of municipal government.

The office takes this mandate to do more than provide quick fixes to isolated problems. Instead, we strive to seek a deeper understanding of the systems and policies guiding municipal actions, and develop recommendations that are adequate, fair, and realistic. The goal is to ensure that these recommendations serve the broader interests of all residents and constituents of the Municipality of Anchorage, fostering trust and improving the overall effectiveness of government operations.

When reviewing this report please recognize the good faith efforts of those serving the Municipality and their commitment to good governance, even as areas for improvement may be identified.



Anchorage Municipal

OMBUDSMAN

Serving the Public Since 1977

Case OM2025-1126: Development Services Department (Addressing)

COMPLAINT

A constituent contacted the Ombudsman's Office concerned that the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Addressing Official had notified them that the municipality was changing the constituent's home address. The constituent questioned the final decision but was told there was no ability to appeal. The constituent requested the Ombudsman's Office review the matter.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

A resident of the South Addition neighborhood received written notice informing them of a change to their home address. The constituent questioned why the address was being changed after several decades and was told it was necessary to ensure timely responses by emergency services, including the police and fire departments. The resident received a letter stating all services and utilities would be notified that the address was moving from the street to the east of the property to the street on the south of the property. When the constituent didn't let the matter go, the Addressing Official referred the constituent to the Ombudsman's Office.

After speaking with the constituent, Ombudsman staff made two site visits to the property to take photos and assess the situation. Based on their observations, they held the opinion that changing the address was not warranted and would actually result in less timely emergency responses.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Ombudsman recommended the constituent be allowed to keep their current address.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Addressing Official requested that the Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) make a site visit and opine on the matter. Based on observations during their site visit, AFD concurred with the opinion of the Ombudsman and the constituent was allowed to keep the address that they had been using.



Case OM2025-1262: Public Transportation Department (People Mover) and Risk Management Department

COMPLAINT

Between early 2024 and late 2025, a constituent contacted the Ombudsman's Office nine times regarding an incident that occurred on a People Mover bus in February 2024. Although no formal complaint form was submitted, the frequency and persistence of the constituent's requests led Ombudsman staff to initiate a formal review. The constituent's primary concerns were: unfair denial by Risk Management of the constituent's liability claims, lack of clarity about the decision-making process, and barriers and complications attempting to access public records held by the Public Transportation Department.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

A constituent contacted the Ombudsman's Office with concerns involving the public transit agency and the municipal risk-management unit. The constituent reported being injured on a People Mover bus and stated they submitted a liability claim to Risk-Management but received no meaningful assistance. The constituent also alleged that the People Mover customer service team was being difficult and unhelpful in the records-request process for video of the incident.

Ombudsman staff gathered relevant documents, including internal municipal communications, incident reports, the claim and denial letter, the records request, and the video provided to the constituent. After review and a meeting with the constituent, Ombudsman staff met with Risk-Management leadership to discuss their evaluation of the claim. Based on the documentation and the discussion, staff concluded that the claim had been assessed adequately and appropriately and that the rationale for denial was supported.

Ombudsman staff later met with supervisors from the public transit agency to review the original video footage and to discuss the records-request procedures. It was determined that the video shared with the constituent had been recorded from a computer screen using a personal device, resulting in extremely poor quality and no audio. Supervisors acknowledged the improper method and explained that the agency's three aging video-security systems create significant technical barriers to producing usable copies. They also noted that policies and procedures had not been updated in more than a decade.



Anchorage Municipal

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Case OM2025-1262 continued:

Following this review, Ombudsman staff concluded that while the records request was technically fulfilled, it did not meet the intent of AMC 3.90 due to software limitations and inconsistent and delayed records fulfillment practices within the transit agency during the past Mayoral administration.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Based on this investigation, Ombudsman staff recommended that People Mover refund the \$50 fee they charged the constituent for the video recording, that they update their policies and procedures for incident management and records requests, and finish modernizing their bus video security systems.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

Public Transportation agreed to refund the constituent's \$50 fee and concurred with the recommendations to finalize the update of its policies and procedures, and to upgrade their bus video security systems. The Ombudsman office acknowledged the fiscal needs attached to upgrading the video security systems and noted that this would likely require assistance from the Assembly and administration to appropriate sufficient money to Public Transit to accomplish this.

This case was released in a Final Investigative Report and was transmitted to the Assembly via AIM 33-2026 on March 24, 2026. That document can be found online by going through the Clerk's website and searching the *Public Portal to Assembly Documents* page or on the Ombudsman's website under *Forms & Documents*.



Case OM2025-1270: Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation

COMPLAINT

In December 2025, a constituent contacted the Ombudsman with concerns about the Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation Board of Supervisors. They reported inconsistent public notice for Board meetings and stated the Board's webpage had not been updated for two months.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The constituent alleged that meeting notices were inconsistent and may not meet municipal code requirements. They also noted that agendas, minutes, and other information on the Board's webpage were not current. The Ombudsman reviewed the Board's webpage and confirmed the information was outdated and a review of municipal public calendars over several months showed that meeting notices were posted inconsistently. At the time, code required "reasonable notice" but did not define the term. Notice for the Board's December 15 meeting was posted on December 11, which the Ombudsman determined did not meet the intent of "reasonable notice" under AMC Title 1. Additionally the Ombudsman noted that the Assembly had recently approved AO 2025-91, establishing a minimum 7-day notice requirement for certain municipal bodies, including the Board, effective January 1, 2026. This change would resolve the constituent's concern regarding timely posting of meeting notices. The constituent further raised concerns that the revised code only required posting the meeting subject 24 hours in advance. The Ombudsman advised that the Board could address this by adopting rules of procedure requiring staff to post subjects earlier. When discussing the complaint with the Director, the Ombudsman learned that recent staff turnover had caused delays in updating the website; staffing issues had since been resolved.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Ombudsman recommended that the constituent propose Board rules of procedure requiring earlier posting of meeting subjects and that the Director ensure consistent webpage updates and compliance with Title 1 public notice requirements.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Director committed to ensuring timely and consistent updates to the Board's webpage and to maintaining public notice procedures that comply with Title 1.



Case OM2025-0297: Not Department Specific

COMPLAINT

In March 2025, a constituent contacted the Ombudsman's Office to raise concerns regarding the City Hall code of conduct. The constituent suggested that the code should be revised to explicitly state that all individuals entering municipal property are to be professional and not impede the official duties of government employees. The constituent believed that the current policy created challenges for security personnel in effectively addressing issues as the requirements and guidelines were not clear.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

A constituent filed a complaint to express concerns that the City Hall code of conduct was confusing, did not have any "teeth", and was not effective in dealing with problematic individuals. Ombudsman staff researched codes of conduct in other jurisdictions and government offices. These included Homeland Security, the State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, and the Code of Federal Regulations. They also researched the sections of municipal code related to disorderly conduct, including AMC 8.30.120.

Several local and state agencies, including Alaska DOT&PF, have adapted Code of Federal Regulation Part 102-74, Facility Management Subpart C when developing their codes of conduct. Staff met with the Municipal Attorney to review the current City Hall code of conduct and discuss its deficiencies. The Legal Department agreed that the policy should be revised to provide clearer guidance and equip City Hall security guards with the tools needed to address inappropriate behavior in the building.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Ombudsman recommended that the City Hall code of conduct be revised to provide clarity and to provide the guards with the tools needed to address poor behavior in City Hall.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Legal Department concurred with the recommendation and drafted and issued a revised City Hall code of conduct.

“We have beome not a melting pot but a beautiful mosiac. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.”

- Jimmy Carter

“The price of the democratic way of life is a growing appreciation of people’s differences, not merely as tolerances, but as the essence of a rich and rewarding human expereince.”

- Jerome Nathanson

Above and Beyond Awards

The Ombudsman's Office recognizes exceptional service by municipal and school district employees, community members, and workgroups through the Above and Beyond Award. These awards honor individuals who demonstrate outstanding service and commitment to the constituents of Anchorage.

In 2025, the Ombudsman's Office recognized 18 individuals across multiple departments, including staff from Zoning, Land Use Enforcement, Development Services, the Library, Property Appraisal, the Municipal Attorney's Office, Planning, and the Anchorage Police Department.

2025 Award Recipients

Dan Woods – Zoning

Elaine Quiboloy-Reid – Land Use Enforcement

John Snelson – Development Services

Katerina "Kat" Soloview – Library

Kevin Hanson – Building Safety

Eric Widman – Building Safety

Jesse Sooter – Building Safety

Kylie Coston – Assessor's Office

Lucas Cleek – Code Abatement

Melissa Johnson – Attorney's Office

Mike Walters – Land Use Enforcement

Nate Holland – Building Safety

Oliver Burbridge – Building Safety

Rachel Eakin – Permitting

Shawn Wilson – PM & E

Marcus McLaughlin – Land Use Enforcement

Rich Diene-Oehm – Permitting

Rebecca Shaw – APD

To nominate an individual or group
please email ombud@muni.org.



2025 Award Recipients

Looking Ahead: The Future of the Ombuds Office

by Deputy Ombudsman Drew Ford

The Ombudsman Office has committed to expanding organizational capacity by investing in professional development, staff training, and strategic planning.

In 2025, the office began reviewing internal policies and procedures and continues to refine investigative practices. In 2026, staff enrolled in courses covering investigative interviewing and equal opportunity investigations, and in Fall 2026 staff will attend the U.S. Ombudsman Association's National Conference, which includes coursework on conflict management, mediation, and strategic planning. The office also plans to work with a consultant in late 2026 to develop a strategic plan.

The office began expanding outreach in 2025 to raise awareness and understanding of its work and plans to continue these efforts. Part of that includes Ombuds staff completed Alaska Humanities Forum's courses in Facilitating Through Conflict (December 2025) and Hosting Impactful Gatherings (January 2026).

Why does this matter?

Anchorage is changing, and the needs of its constituents are changing as well. As local government strives to evolve alongside the

community, the systems and departments responsible for delivering public services are working within the practical limits of current fiscal and cultural realities.

Concerns about public safety, community violence, homelessness, affordability, tax policy, technology, and transparency have become recurring themes in Ombudsman complaints. They are frequently driven by constituents' perception that they aren't being given the "full picture."

Municipal departments are committed to addressing these issues, but financial constraints, staffing capacity, and broader policy direction define what can realistically be achieved. Maintaining public trust requires acknowledging these pressures and engaging in open dialogue about the limits and tradeoffs of providing, or not providing, public services. The evolution of the Ombuds Office in the 21st Century is to work within these tensions—between legislative and executive priorities, between constituent needs and public servant capacities, and between fiscal constraints and voter expectations.

The Ombudsman Office has renewed its focus on accountability, problem solving, and equity. The office remains committed to strengthening how it investigates, communicates, and serves constituents and preserving its role as a trusted, impartial, independent, and accessible resource.



“The wave of the future is not the conquest of the world by a single dogmatic creed but the liberation of the diverse energies of free nations and free men.”

- President John F. Kennedy



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"All power is a trust, that we are accountable for its exercise." - Benjamin Disraeli