

# Legislative Council Connection

Issue 3 | September 2020

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## Director's Corner John Bjornson

While the leaves begin to fall and the number of hours of sunlight decreases, the work of the Legislative Council staff increases as we begin preparing for the 2021 legislative session. Several interim committees have finished work for the interim, and the remaining committees are working hard this month and next to complete their work before the final reports of the committees are presented to the Legislative Management on November 12-13. In addition to wrapping up the interim process and preparing the final reports of the committees, Legislative Council staff members are drafting bills, reviewing agency budget information and preparing fiscal information for legislators, and addressing all the administrative and information technology needs for the 2021 session.

Just as it has affected the interim study process, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our preparations for the legislative session. Although everyone hopes the session will proceed as normal, we continue to prepare for alternative scenarios so that we will be able to provide options in the event adaptations will be necessary. The most noticeable changes will be the ability to live stream all committee meetings and the capability to allow participation by legislators from locations other than the

usual committee rooms and legislative chambers. During your next visit to the House and Senate chambers, you will notice new video voting boards, which, if necessary, will allow legislators to be present in the chambers through remote means and participate through Microsoft Teams or Zoom. In addition, if necessary, legislators will be able to securely vote from remote locations and have the votes appear on the voting boards as if the legislators were present physically in the chambers. We will continue to make technological advances to facilitate participation in the legislative process for legislators and citizens of the state. Along with the technological changes and accommodations, we are examining other safety measures, including acquiring additional space in the Capitol complex to promote social distancing and purchasing additional cleaning and sanitizing supplies.

Although the employees of a majority of executive branch agencies and the judicial branch continue to work from home and many executive branch agencies remain closed to the public other than by appointment, the 32 employees of the legislative branch remain committed to serving the legislative branch as the Legislative Council staff has for three-quarters of a century. Although a few interim committee meetings were canceled in early August when a member of our staff tested positive for COVID-19, we were able to limit the spread of the virus effectively. The last thing we want

is to cause the legislative process to come to a halt due to staff being ill or staff spreading the virus to legislators. Therefore, if you see our staff taking extra precautions such as not shaking hands, keeping distance between others, and wearing face coverings, please do not be offended or think they are making some kind of statement. We simply are doing our best to ensure the legislative process will continue moving forward without delay or endangering others.

## KEY DATES

### October

1 - Legislative Drafting Seminar

### November

3 - General Election

11 - Veterans' Day (state holiday)

12-13 - Legislative Management Mtg.

26 - Thanksgiving (state holiday)

### December

1-3 - Organizational Session

4 - Agency profile deadline

### January

5 - Session begins

For information and links to resources and responses to COVID-19, including policies, responses, and executive orders, please visit <https://www.legis.nd.gov/covid-19-information>.

# Legal Division

Vonette J. Richter  
Legal Division Director

As the calendar turns to September of every even-numbered year, the attorneys in the legal division know that means it's time to wrap up our interim committees and begin working on committee final reports. By the numbers, this interim our attorneys staffed 15 committees that conducted 35 studies, received 72 reports, and performed numerous other responsibilities including reviewing administrative rules, contracting with outside entities, considering numerous bill drafts, developing a multi-county pilot project, and planning the 2021 legislative session. By the end of September, all but three of the committees will have completed their 2019-20 interim work. The legal division also is preparing for the 2020 Legislative Drafting Seminar on October 1, 2020, at which members of the staff will provide a review of constitutional, statutory, and legislative rules relating to the drafting of bills, resolutions, and amendments, together with the practical application of those rules and coverage of the legislative drafting manual.

This phase of the interim is a busy time for our library staff, Kylah and Melissa, as well, as preparations for the upcoming legislative session are well underway. Our library staff takes a lead role in the training of committee clerks, desk staff, and other session employees as well as providing invaluable information and training to new legislators.

Beginning with this issue of the newsletter, we would like our readers to learn a little more about each member of the legal division. In this issue, we are featuring the two newest attorneys to join our staff-- Jill Grossman and Christopher Joseph.



**Jill Grossman** has served as legal counsel at the Legislative Council since September 2018. Her portfolio includes gaming, commerce, Indian law, civil law, human rights, domestic relations, and abuse and neglect.

Jill, a 2006 graduate of Jamestown High School, received her Bachelor of Science in psychology in 2010 and her Juris Doctorate in 2014 from the University of North Dakota where she was a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. Between earning her degrees, Jill worked as a phlebotomist for Altru.

During law school, Jill worked as a law clerk at the Morley Law Firm, served on the Law Women's Caucus's board, and was an associate editor for the University of North Dakota Law Review.

Upon graduation from law school, Jill completed a 1-year clerkship for Justice Carol Ronning Kapsner at the North Dakota Supreme Court and a 3-year federal district court clerkship for Judge Daniel Hovland.

Jill and her husband, Jaden, welcomed a son, Owen, to their family in December 2019. The family attends McCabe Methodist Church. In her free time she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, reading, baking, and relaxing at the lake.

**Christopher Joseph**, also a graduate of the University of North Dakota School of Law, began as legal counsel with the Legislative Council in June 2016. After receiving his Bachelor of Science degree in legal studies from Nova Southeastern University in Florida and serving in the Navy as a Fleet Marine Force Hospital Corpsman, Chris moved to North Dakota to attend law school. Chris brings a unique perspective to the Council having been born in Somalia and raised in Denmark while his father served in the Navy. At the Legislative Council,



Chris' portfolio includes criminal law, transportation, natural resources, workers' compensation, veterans' laws, and the Uniform Commercial Code.

Before joining the Legislative Council, Chris served a 2-year clerkship for the Southeast Judicial District and as an assistant attorney general in the Civil Litigation Division of the Attorney General's office.

In June, Chris and his wife Alexis, a Bismarck native, welcomed a baby girl, Athena, to their family and are enjoying their lives as new parents. Chris enjoys spending time at the gym, traveling, and the occasional Jedi "beatdown" on his PS4.

# Fiscal Division

Allen H. Knudson  
Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor  
Major items affecting the fiscal staff include:

## ***Budget Development***

The budget development process for the 2021-23 biennium is in its early stages. The Governor released his budget guidelines in May for state agencies to use in the preparation of their budget requests. The guidelines require agencies to reduce budget requests by 5 to 15 percent depending on the size of the agency. The Governor has exempted a number of agency programs from the reduction requirement including state school aid in the Department of Public Instruction and medical assistance grants in the Department of Human Services. The statutory deadline

for agencies to submit budget requests to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is July 15; however, the director of OMB may grant extensions and often does. As of September 18, 41 of 74 agency budget requests have been submitted.

## ***Revenue Forecast Updates***

On Tuesday, September 22, the Legislative Revenue Advisory Committee, Senator Ray Holmberg, Chairman, received updated revenue forecast information from IHS Markit for the remainder of the current biennium and a preliminary forecast for the 2021-23 biennium. In addition, OMB, with the assistance of Moody's Analytics, updated the state's revenue forecast for the current biennium and is preparing a preliminary forecast for the 2021-23 biennium. The OMB forecasts were presented to the Budget Section on Thursday, September 17.

## ***Finance Facts Pocket Brochure***

The fiscal staff has completed the update of the North Dakota Finance Facts pocket brochure that is provided to all legislators. The brochure, which contains charts, graphs, and statistics on the North Dakota economy and state budget, were presented to the Budget Section on Thursday, September 17, and distributed to all legislators shortly thereafter.

## ***Budget Basics Emails***

The fiscal staff is preparing a series of budget basics emails that will be sent to all legislators beginning in October. The emails will provide basic information on the state budget and the state budget process. We are hopeful these emails will provide more legislators with a broader knowledge and a better understanding of the state budget and will assist all legislators in preparation for the legislative session.

# Administrative Services Division

Jason J. Steckler  
Administrative Services Division Director

## Administrative Services Division:

The staff within the Administrative Services Division continue to support legislators and staff during these changing times. One does not know what will happen day to day, whether it is work locations, requests for information technology, administrative support, or other work directives. Things take a toll on our employees, but we are extremely proud of our staff and their continued effort to support everyone for the “people’s work.” Below you will find an update from each section within Administrative Services. Again, we stand ready to assist and solve any problems to the best of our abilities.

## Information Technology Services:

The Legislative Council IT staff are continuing to issue replacement laptops and iPads to legislators through the interim. A little over half the legislators have received the new equipment. Information Technology staff will be contacting legislators to schedule replacements.

The IT staff are preparing for the legislative session, reviewing and planning training for legislators and assembly staff. Information Technology staff also are testing the new video cameras installed in the committee rooms which will be used to live stream the committee meetings. The House and Senate voting board upgrades

will be completed soon. The new voting boards will be able to display video or presentation content. A new remote voting application also is being configured and tested. Information Technology staff will provide legislators with training on this new application in late November via remote training sessions.

## Office Services:

Office services is ramping up preparations for the session. We are busy editing and finalizing bill drafts and final reports, preparing for the bill drafting seminar and agency bill pre-filing, and updating and printing forms and other documents used during session. In addition to our regular preparations, support staff has been busy cleaning legislative areas, stocking the joint supply room, and preparing committee rooms, offices, and other common legislative areas with the proper supplies to maintain a clean and safe environment for everyone participating in the events leading up to and during the 2021 session.

## Business Analyst:

The BA has been helping with the design and testing of a new application that will allow legislators to submit online requests for bill drafts and research work. This new application will also allow legislators to request cosponsors for bills to be prefiled or introduced. The Legislative Council has begun using the new version of LEGEND, the bill drafting system and the BA has been helping staff get familiar with the differences in the new version. The BA also has been working with the executive branch Information Technology Department to implement procedures

# Staff Highlight



**Andrea Cooper,**  
Lead Legislative Services Specialist, began working for the Legislative Council in March of 2004. Andrea leads the support staff team. She creates the graphics and images

seen on the digital signage, publications, website, and this newsletter. She is responsible for website and database management, updates relating to legislator information, processing office documents, and proofing and processing bill drafts and other legislative documents. During session she oversees all enrolling and engrossing activities, managing workflow and various other tasks. She also assists to train Legislative Council staff, session staff, and legal interns in using the Legend bill drafting system. Andrea also helps the Legislative Council IT staff test and support applications.

Andrea and her husband Rich have 2 dogs a 2-year old, 85 pound German Shorthaired Pointer, and a 3-year old, Brittany Spaniel. She enjoys boating on the Missouri River, spending time with friends, family, her dogs, and doing arts and crafts.

and software required to change from a waterfall to an agile software development methodology, ensuring the process meets the needs of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly.

## WHAT'S NEW at the Legislative Council?

One change you'll see at your next visit to the Legislative Council office is the front reception area. The old front desks were built in 1982 when the Council moved to the 2nd Floor of the tower. The desks were not adjustable and not designed for technology. The new desk area is ergonomic allowing for standing and individual height adjustment, and provides more working surface area and storage in the front office. In addition to the new desk, the sitting area has been equipped with a chair, loveseat, and an end table with outlets. New carpet has been installed and the old water fountain, which has not been operational for decades, has been removed.



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY APPAREL

Clothing with the Legislative Assembly logo is now available to legislators through the Legislative Council gift fund. Apparel options and prices are listed below. Orders received by Friday, October 9th, 2020, will be available for pickup at the Legislative Council office during the November Legislative Management meeting. Orders not picked up at the Legislative Management meeting will be available for pick up during the Organizational Session in December. If you have any questions, please contact Levi Kinnischtzke at 701-328-2916 or lkinnischtzke@nd.gov.

Each clothing item will have the Legislative Assembly logo embroidered on the left top chest. Logos will be embroidered in gold and burgundy thread.

Print and mail the order form below, along with a check for the amount payable to:

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GIFT FUND  
State Capitol  
600 East Boulevard Avenue  
Bismarck, ND 58505



**MEN**



### Port Authority Collective Soft shell Jacket

94/6 poly/spandex woven mini ripstop with a DWR finish bonded to a water-resistant film insert and a 100% polyester brushed tricot interior; Slightly longer length; Molded center front zipper; Front reverse-coil zippered covered pockets

Available in: Black or Graphite Grey  
Available in sizes: XS - 4XL

Size: \_\_\_\_\_  
Color: \_\_\_\_\_  
Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_  
x \$48 ea. = \_\_\_\_\_



### Sport-Tek Micropique Sport-Wick Polo

Smooth micropique polos that wick moisture and resist snags; 3.8-ounce; 100% polyester tricot; Snag resistant; Moisture-wicking; Double-needle stitching throughout; Tag-free label; Taped neck; Flat knit collar; 3-button placket with dyed-to-match rubber buttons; Set-in; open hem sleeves; Armhole accent; Side vents

Available in: Black, Iron Grey, White  
Available in sizes: XS - 6XL

Size: \_\_\_\_\_  
Color: \_\_\_\_\_  
Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_  
x \$32 ea. = \_\_\_\_\_

SIZE CHART

	XS	S	M	L	XL	2XL	3XL	4XL	5XL	6XL
Chest	32-34	35-37	38-40	41-43	44-46	47-49	50-53	54-57	58-60	61-63

**WOMEN**



### Port Authority Ladies Collective Soft shell Jacket

94/6 poly/spandex woven mini ripstop with a DWR finish bonded to a water-resistant film insert and a 100% polyester brushed tricot interior; Slightly longer length; Molded center front zipper; Front reverse-coil zippered covered pockets

Available in: Black or Graphite Grey  
Available in sizes: XS - 4XL

Size: \_\_\_\_\_  
Color: \_\_\_\_\_  
Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_  
x \$48 ea. = \_\_\_\_\_



### Sport-Tek Ladies PosiCharge Competitor Polo

Color-locking, moisture-wicking polo; 3.8-ounce; 100% polyester interlock with PosiCharge technology; Flat knit collar; Removable tag for comfort and relabeling; Taped neck; Elongated 2-button placket with dyed-to-match buttons; Set-in; Open hem sleeves

Available in: Black, Iron Grey, White  
Available in sizes: XS - 4XL

Size: \_\_\_\_\_  
Color: \_\_\_\_\_  
Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_  
x \$24 ea. = \_\_\_\_\_

SIZE CHART

	XS	S	M	L	XL	XXL	3XL	4XL
Size	2	4/6	8/10	12/14	16/18	20/22	24/26	28/30
Bust	32-34	35-36	37-38	39-41	42-44	45-47	48-51	52-55