



# North Dakota Legislative Council

Prepared for the Legislative Procedure  
and Arrangements Committee  
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## **LEGISLATIVE INTERN PROGRAM**

This memorandum provides an overview of the legislative intern program and the various duties legislative interns perform during legislative session.

### **HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM**

The legislative intern program began during the 1969 legislative session after the interim legislative committee on Legislative Procedure and Arrangements and the Legislative Council, known at the time as the Legislative Research Committee, approved the program during the 1967-69 biennium. During the 1969 legislative session, six legislative interns were hired, including four law students from the University of North Dakota School of Law and two graduate political science students from the University of North Dakota. At that time, two to three law students were assigned to assist the floor leaders and the remaining interns were assigned to the standing committees with the largest workloads.

The legislative interns who worked for the floor leaders were responsible for researching bills and issues posed throughout the legislative process and performing other duties for the floor leaders. The interns who worked for the standing committees researched bills, prepared amendments to bills, answered communications from other states, researched subjects pertinent to the committee's work, and provided other general assistance to the committee.

### **PRESENT DAY PROGRAM**

Although the program initially included undergraduate and graduate students, over the last few decades the program has focused on hiring law students through a cooperative program with the University of North Dakota School of Law. The Legislative Council is allocated 10 law students who serve as legislative interns in standing committees and, over the last three sessions, an additional law student with a finance background who works with the fiscal staff and the appropriations committees. Since the 1969 legislative session, the duties of the legislative interns have remained largely the same and include drafting amendments and providing research to Chairmen and committees while conducting themselves in a professional and nonpartisan manner. Since its inception, the legislative intern program has been under the control and supervision of the professional staff of the Legislative Council and legislative interns complete a comprehensive questionnaire at the conclusion of the session.

Over the past decade, the number of legislative interns and monthly stipend has increased. During the 2013 legislative session, the Legislative Council employed 10 interns and each intern received a monthly stipend of \$3,000. For the 2015 legislative session, the Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee increased the monthly stipend to \$3,300 based on updated guidelines established by the American Bar Association relating to how much law students who participate in intern programs and receive both credit and a monetary stipend may be compensated. Since the Committee increased the stipend to \$3,500 for the 2017 legislative session, the stipend has remained the same and since the 2019 legislative session, the Legislative Council has employed 11 interns.

### **INTERN SELECTION PROCESS**

While the type of student selected to participate in the program has changed over the years, the selection process has remained consistent. The Legislative Council contacts the University of North Dakota School of Law during the fall of each odd-numbered year to confirm a desire to continue the program and the university opens an application period during the following spring semester. The university reviews the applications, interviews the students, and provides the Legislative Council with a list of individuals selected to participate in the program before the fall semester begins. The Legislative Council intern coordinator contacts the selected interns and visits the university to provide preliminary materials. The legislative interns begin their work with the Legislative Council with training the week before each session begins and are contracted through April 30<sup>th</sup> of each odd-numbered year.