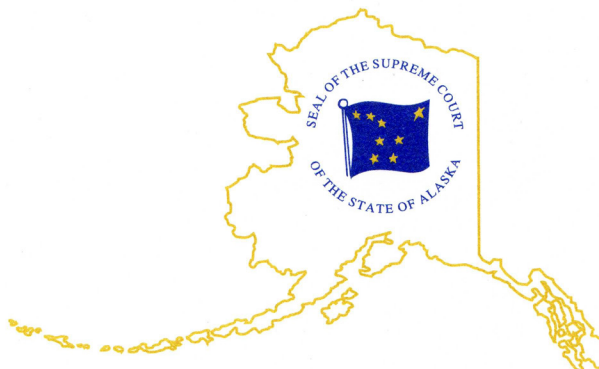


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Supreme Court
State of Alaska

Alaska Supreme Court Statement Regarding Recent Budget Cuts

On Friday, June 28, 2019, Governor Dunleavy announced vetoes of two legislatively appropriated budget items for the Alaska Court System. The first was \$1,756,300 that the legislature appropriated for small cost of living allowances for our non-union, non-judicial staff, designed to match union contract pay increases approved by the legislature for similar state employees in other government branches. The second was \$337,700 of the legislature's original \$7,217,200 appropriation for our two appellate courts. The second veto carried a statement explaining it was in response to the governor's disagreement with a recent supreme court decision.

Alaska, like the country as a whole, has a system of government with three co-equal branches. At its most basic, this means that the legislature makes the law, the governor enforces the law, and the supreme court, when faced with a constitutional challenge to a law, is required to decide it. Legislators, governors, and all other Alaskans certainly have the right to their own opinions about the constitutionality of government action, but ultimately it is the courts that are required to decide what the constitution mandates. In a democracy based on majority rule, it is important that laws be interpreted fairly and consistently. We assure all Alaskans that the Alaska Court System will continue to render independent court decisions based on the rule of law, without regard to the politics of the day.

Finally, we reiterate to our dedicated court staff that we value your extraordinary efforts to serve Alaska's citizens each and every day. In response to Alaska's recent financial crisis and in recognition that the court system has a duty to be a good steward of the public's money, we proposed and the legislature made significant reductions to the court system's operating budget, reductions that resulted in the closure of all courts statewide on Friday afternoons and a consequent reduction of your salaries by 4% over the past three years, a cut not shared by the other two branches of government. In fairness we urge the legislature to restore the cost of living allowances that will return you to equal footing with employees of the executive and legislative branches.