LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF

The Legislative Council Staff is the nonpartisan *research* staff of the General Assembly. The services provided by the Legislative Council Staff can be grouped into two broad categories: services provided directly to General Assembly members and services supporting the General Assembly as an institution.

Services Provided Directly to Members of the General Assembly

The Legislative Council Staff provides research services directly to individual members of the General Assembly. These research services help members as they participate in the ongoing legislative process. The individual services can be grouped into legislative requests for information and requests to answer constituent questions.

Individual legislative requests. The Legislative Council Staff prepares research memoranda at the request of any General Assembly member. These research requests frequently relate to background for bill requests, constituent concerns on specific questions, bills going through the legislative process, background for speeches or meetings, or simply topics of interest. The Legislative Council Staff is a nonpartisan office and, therefore, cannot respond to requests that are partisan in nature.

Research requests can be submitted to Legislative Council Staff through a number of avenues.

- ✓ Members can relay the specifics of the research request to any staff person, including the staffer assigned to the member's committee of reference.
- ✓ Members can call Legislative Council Staff and the front office staff will direct the member to the appropriate staffer to take the request.
- ✓ A request can be submitted electronically through the members' General Assembly Intranet website.

In all instances, the request will be entered into Legislative Council Staff's electronic research database and assigned to the appropriate staff person. It is the policy of Legislative Council Staff to have the staff person assigned to the request contact the legislator to verify the scope of the request.

The confidentiality of memoranda or other documents produced by the staff for a legislator is governed by state law. In essence, the Open Public Records Law provides that memoranda produced by Legislative Council Staff are public information unless they relate to pending or proposed legislation or amendments *and* the requesting legislator asks that they be kept permanently confidential. In all other instances, memoranda become public information once they are finalized. In most cases, a memorandum prepared by Legislative Council Staff contains a statement to notify the requesting legislator of the status of his or her memorandum. The purpose of the statement, located either at the top or bottom of the first

page, is to express the current status of the memorandum relative to the Open Public Records Law and ***to invite legislators to contact the office if they wish the document to be handled differently***. Please contact the office if you have questions about the Open Public Records Law and confidentiality of research requests.

Constituent services. The Legislative Council Staff assists members by providing information to answer constituent questions. At a legislator's request, the staff will provide factual material directly to a constituent to answer his or her question or will provide the information to the legislator. However, the Legislative Council Staff does not provide legal opinions or intervene in disputes between a citizen and any other unit of government.

Support of the Legislative Institution During the Session

When the General Assembly is in session, the Legislative Council Staff performs a number of services integral to the legislative process. These services include staffing committees of reference, estimating the fiscal impact of proposed legislation, forecasting state revenue and other items that impact the state budget, and operating various support systems.

Assigned staff for committees of reference. Each committee of reference is assigned a staff person who is involved with the day-to-day committee operations. The staff person assists the chair in managing the committee's calendar and performs a number of duties relating to the legislative process, including:

- ✓ preparing a committee report for each bill, which includes the final action on the bill and any amendments to a bill adopted by the committee;
- ✓ preparing announcements of the committee's calendar, notifying bill sponsors about the calendaring of their bills, scheduling conference committees, and writing a brief summary of committee meetings; and
- ✓ providing information to the public and government officials about the operations of the committee.

The staff person is available to help any legislator obtain information on bills assigned to the committee or to research topics of interest to the committee. Staff may also assist committee members in working with the Office of Legislative Legal Services to get amendments prepared.

Fiscal notes. The Legislative Council Staff has the responsibility to review each printed bill and concurrent resolution for probable fiscal impact. Legislative Council Staff prepares the "official" fiscal note on proposed legislation. Fiscal notes are not prepared for appropriations bills, joint resolutions, memorials, or resolutions.

The fiscal note provides an estimate of a proposal's revenue and expenditure impact on state and local governments. This estimate is based on an objective analysis of the proposal. Because time available for analysis is very limited during a legislative session, fiscal notes cannot provide a detailed budgetary analysis of each proposal. No comments or

opinions relative to the merits of any proposal are included in the fiscal note. Legislative Council Staff prepares fiscal notes on the introduced bill, revised fiscal notes, statements of no fiscal impact, memoranda to amendments, and final fiscal notes.

Economic and revenue forecasts. The Legislative Council Staff forecasts state General Fund and cash funds revenue quarterly. These revenue forecasts are used to develop the state budget, to monitor state spending in relation to revenue, and to determine and report the amount of excess state revenue under Referendum C. The staff also forecasts a number of other items that are used to determine costs of programs for the budget process. These items include:

- ✓ the prison population for adults and juveniles;
- ✓ assessed values and property taxes for school districts and the Gallagher Amendment;
- ✓ kindergarten through twelfth grade public school enrollment; and
- ✓ higher education enrollment.

The staff also publishes other analyses of the national and Colorado economies between forecasts, evaluates revenue and budget issues for the General Assembly and for fiscal notes, and prepares research memoranda on tax policy-related matters.

Support of the Legislative Process During the Interim

Many of the services performed by the Legislative Council Staff are ongoing. Economic forecasting is a year-round activity, and the need for the various support systems continues throughout the year. In addition, the General Assembly usually creates interim committees to study specific issues during the months when the legislature is not in session. The Legislative Council Staff provides staff services for these committees. Also, the state constitution directs the nonpartisan research staff of the General Assembly, which is the Legislative Council Staff, to publish an analysis of the constitutional and statutory amendments that will be on the ballot.

Staff services for interim committees. For interim committees, the staff prepares research reports on the issues before the committee, arranges meetings and agendas, compiles minutes, provides information to the public about the committee's work, and prepares the committee's final report.

Publication and distribution of the ballot analysis. Each year, the Legislative Council Staff publishes a ballot analysis on the statewide issues that will appear on the November election ballot. The analysis includes a summary of the provisions of the proposed constitutional amendment or law, general background on the topic, and arguments for and arguments against the proposals. The ballot analysis, often called the "blue book," is mailed to all registered voter households for each general election.

Support Systems

The Legislative Council Staff operates a print shop, a library, centralized accounting services, and information technology services to support the General Assembly and its service agencies. The Legislative Council Staff also manages the Capitol Building Tour Service.

- ✓ The print shop prints engrossed and reengrossed copies of bills and final copies of acts adopted by the General Assembly. The print shop also prints reports for all four legislative service agencies.

- ✓ The Joint Legislative Library maintains reference materials and information on subject areas pertinent to governmental functions. The library is also equipped to search the Internet and some databases.

- ✓ A centralized accounting service is maintained for the legislative branch service agencies. Compensation and benefit services to General Assembly members is also provided.

- ✓ The information technology section provides information technology services and support to all legislators and legislative staff. The section's responsibilities include ongoing support and maintenance for the General Assembly's computers, printers, networking equipment, servers, storage systems, and wireless network. It also manages services pertaining to a centralized file storage system, website support, and development and maintenance of various custom software applications for use by legislative staff.

- ✓ The Capitol Building Tour Service is responsible for visitor tours of the Capitol, as well as educational programs about state government for elementary and secondary school children.