

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Contact:** Kate Burkhart, 907-465-4970, [kate.burkhart@akleg.gov](mailto:kate.burkhart@akleg.gov)**OMBUDSMAN KATE BURKHART BEGINS SECOND TERM, LOOKS TO  
BUILD ON SUCCESSES TO INCREASE ACCESS TO SERVICES**

**June 27, 2022, Juneau** – Kate Burkhart begins her second term as Alaska State Ombudsman today. The Alaska State Legislature, in joint session, unanimously approved her reappointment on May 4, 2022.

During her first five-year term, Ombudsman Burkhart supported the ombudsman team to:

- implement a modern case management system to support efficient intake and investigation of complaints and provide data and analysis of complaints and ombudsman services;
- design a user-focused website that provides 24/7 access to information, community referrals, and a confidential online complaint portal ([www.ombud.alaska.gov](http://www.ombud.alaska.gov));
- expand outreach and services to Alaskans living in rural communities;
- deliver training on the best practices for administrative investigations to ombudsman investigators and investigators from partner organizations;
- implement a continuity of operations plan in 2020 that preserved staff health and wellness and ensured access to ombudsman services without major disruption; and
- provide training, technical assistance, and mentorship to other ombudsman organizations.

“I am very proud of the ombudsman team, and their commitment to the values of objectivity, curiosity, respect, integrity, and public service,” said Ombudsman Burkhart. Despite the disruptions and stresses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, ombudsman staff were able to respond to requests for services and continued to resolve more than 90% of complaints informally, finding solutions to problems and supporting communication between complainants and agencies. In 2021, over half of investigations were completed and closed in less than 90 days; and 81% were completed within a year.

Ombudsman Burkhart explained, “In the past five years, we have refined our practice with greater focus on the consultation process with agencies so that ombudsman recommendations are more likely to resolve the issues raised in the complaint investigation.” One of the Ombudsman’s goals for this term is increasing access to ombudsman services through stakeholder partnerships, leveraging technology for outreach, and exploring innovative ways to deliver services.

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