

June 21, 2011

Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly:

President Gary Knopp, Vice President Charlie Pierce, Bill Smith, Mako Haggerty, Linda Murphy, Ray Tauriainen, Sue McClure, Hal Smalley and Brent Johnson

It is our opinion the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly needs to reconsider its stance on Ordinance 2011-11 which would increase the Borough Mayor's salary from \$80,000 per year to \$99,000 per year. We feel this was not well thought out and understand that several people testified against it.

Since the average salary of a worker in our Borough is \$794 per week this would make the mayor's salary more than twice that of the average constituent. According to the US Department of Labor (03/23/2011) the average salary in the Kenai Peninsula Borough is \$41,288 per year. The average household (2.6 people) income is \$60,235. We would also point out that although May's unemployment numbers dropped from 11% to 8.7% it is summer after all and there are some seasonal jobs to provide relief – the outlook for this coming winter is not so rosy.

It is irresponsible of our Assembly to consider giving a raise to someone who is not a professional. The Borough is on record in previous ordinances maintaining public servants are not professional politicians. The Mayor is chosen at the pleasure of the people. In an election one hopes the best candidate for the job wins but we all know it could very well be the butcher, the baker or the candlestick maker because it's really a popularity contest. There are no guarantees that whoever is elected has any background or expertise in governing. In fact, with current limits a mayor will only get 6 years experience before being termed out – that's a lot of money for 6 years of service that he or she may not have even been qualified for in the first place.

This feels like déjà vu all over again. In May 2008 this issue was addressed and cooler heads prevailed. You simply cannot compare the salary of a public servant to career employees who have education and experience to justify their wages and benefits. This is like comparing apples and oranges. We urge the Assembly to repeal this ordinance. An elected official should not be paid more than twice what the average worker on the Kenai Peninsula earns.

Brendan and Patti Boily
4935 Clover Lane
Homer, AK 99603
907-235-7391
pbboily@xyz.net

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