

Legislative Intern Program

Proposed Changes for the 2017 General Session

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Background:

Every year, the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel works with nine specified universities to hire and train undergraduate college students to work as Legislative interns for the General Session.

Legislative interns are paid a stipend of \$2,400 for their time employed by OLRGC. They are hired as state employees. As such, they are covered by worker's compensation and the state pays their respective taxes, etc. Legislative interns are not, however, eligible for health coverage, nor does their time as an intern count towards state retirement benefits.

The \$2,400 stipend is based on an average of 40 hours of work over 8 weeks. As such, our office has set the hire date for Legislative interns around the middle of January each year. Legislators have expressed a strong desire to have their interns start earlier. An earlier start date would facilitate the intern experience by providing the intern with opportunities to get up to speed on legislation and policy issues that are important to the legislator before the General Session begins. Legislators also point out that meetings regarding priority issues begin in earnest in early January.

Proposed Changes:

- **Earlier start date.** After meeting with representatives of the participating schools, they are supportive of moving up the hiring date for legislative interns to the first business day following the New Year. Interns would be available on a part-time basis to their legislators (limited to 4 hours during the afternoon) for the first two weeks to allow them to attend the Legislative prep course that is required by their respective schools. The part-time availability for the first two weeks would allow the interns to receive training and instruction that is critical to their success as an intern. Interns would be available on a full-time basis thereafter, until the end of the General Session.
- **Increase the stipend.** The longer internship would necessitate an increase in pay from \$2,400 to \$3,150. This increased cost reflects an increase in the anticipated hours that an intern would be available to their assigned legislator, from 320 to 420 hours.
- **Post-Session Evaluation.** Should these, or any other changes be implemented, we would like to review and evaluate the proposed changes to the Legislative Intern Program and return and report to the Legislative Management Committee, following the 2017 General Session.

Fiscal Impact:

- Average number of hours of additional work (100 hours)
 - \$7.50 hourly rate
 - \$750 additional pay per intern
 - \$106 additional benefits cost per intern
 - \$856 total additional cost per intern
 - 93 total interns
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- \$79,592 total additional cost per year