

Dee Olin Hoffman is the new trouble shooter in the ombudsman's office

I interviewed Dee Olin Hoffman, of the Ombudsman's office whose job is to make aware the readers of the Tundra Times and other residents of Alaska of the Services of the Ombudsman and how it can help them:

Story and Photo
By ROGER WRIGHT, JR.

The Office of the Ombudsman was created by legislative action in 1975. The agency was established to provide a much needed grievance procedure for individuals experiencing problems with the 17 state agencies which service all citizens of Alaska.

One-third of Alaska has contacted the office for services. It apparently isn't reaching the North Slope region, interior Yukon Region, Norton Sound, Bering Sea, Bristol Bay, and Aleutian chain. That is two-thirds of Alaska. The agency believes that persons in these areas are unaware of the office and how it can serve them.

The Office of the Ombudsman has proven an invaluable service to those seeking help. Thorough, professional investigative work, the office has established credibility. It is not another public service that offers false expectations and disappears over the horizon never to be heard from again. Inquiries are answered on the spot, and investigations are carried through to completion.

The office has two responsibilities: 1) to receive and investigate complaints from the public and to obtain rectification of complaints found to be justified and (2) to improve public administration.

The Ombudsman has the power to subpoena witnesses or information pertinent to a case, walk in and inspect state premises, and administer oaths to persons giving testimony.

When a conflict occurs between a person and a state agency, and that person has tried to resolve the problem himself but cannot, then he can seek the Ombudsman's help. If the Ombudsman finds the complaint within his jurisdiction he notifies the department of the allegation and requests its version of the facts and answers to specific questions.

Ombudsman investigations center around agency policy: Is there a policy? Was the complainant informed of the policy? Is the policy applied uniformly? Is the policy fair, legal and was it adopted correctly?

After completion of investigation, the Ombudsman notifies both complainant and agency whether the complaint was found to be unsupported, partially justified. Depending on which, the investigation is either terminated, or the Ombudsman requires consultation with the

agency before making a recommendation. If the agency does not heed the recommendation and does not voluntarily rectify the complaint, the Ombudsman may present his opinion and recommendation to the Governor, the legislature, a grand jury, or the public. The Ombudsman must include any reply made by the agency with his opinion.

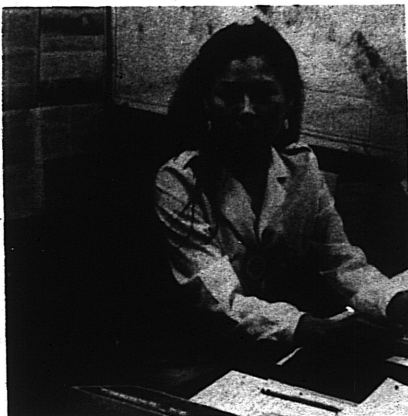
Alaska state agencies include Administration, Community and Regional Affairs, Commerce and Economic Development, Education, Environmental Conservation, Fish and Game, Health and Social Services, Labor, Law, Military Affairs, Natural Resources, Public Safety, Revenue, Transportation and Public Facilities, Professional and Vocational Regulations, and Office of the Ombudsman.

If you need help, please contact their three regional offices in Alaska:

South East Region
Office of the Ombudsman
Pouch WO
Juneau, Alaska 99811
(907) 465-4970

Office of the Ombudsman
840 K Street, Room 203
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907) 276-4011

North Region
Office of the Ombudsman
P.O. Box 74358
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707
(907) 442-4001



DEE OLIN HOFFMAN