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State IT Dept's Spending Raises Lawmaker Eyebrows in Light of MNLARS Issues

State IT Dept's Office Expenses Raise Lawmaker Eyebrows in Light of MNLARS Issues



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As has been well reported, some state lawmakers have butted heads with officials at the Minnesota IT Services department, or MNIT, over computer software problems with the state's vehicle licensing and registration system, known as MNLARS.

Now, there are questions about MNIT's office expenses.

MNIT decided last fall, after the MNLARS problems began to surface, to spend \$2.5 million to revamp some of its office space and create more room for employees without incurring additional costs to secure leases on new office locations.

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MNIT spokesperson Cambray Crozier said the restructuring of office space would allow MNIT to save significant money for taxpayers in the long run.


"The up-front cost is \$2.5 million, which will be offset over three-and-a-half years through cost-avoidance related to lease expenses and office space buildout," Crozier said via email. "After three-and-a-half years, this approach yields \$462,000 annually in lease-cost avoidance."



(<http://kstp.com/5takeaction/>)

Take Action!

In light of the ongoing issues with MNLARS, what do you think about MNIT spending \$2.5 million to revamp office space?

		
Mark Dayton D - Governor	Mary Kiffmeyer R - State Senate	Sarah Anderson R - State House

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State Sen. Mary Kiffmeyer chairs the State Government Committee, which oversees agencies like MNIT. She said she disagrees with MNIT's decision to spend money on office improvements when the MNLARS problem recently required \$10 million in emergency funding.



An MNIT office currently under renovation.
KSTP/Jay Kolls

"I, and other lawmakers, feel misled by MNIT," Kiffmeyer said. "They came to us saying they need more money, they don't have enough money, and obviously they have the money."

Kiffmeyer said MNIT did not tell lawmakers it was redoing its office spaces when it was pushing for the emergency funding.

"We want the focus to be on fixing MNLARS," Kiffmeyer said. "And when you hear MNIT's requests for \$10 million in emergency spending, it is a little concerning to see they have \$2.5 million to spend on their cubicles, but not going toward the MNLARS problem."

RELATED: After Weeks of Clashing, Lawmakers Move on MNLARS Funding (<http://kstp.com/politics/after-weeks-of-clashing-minnesota-lawmakers-poised-to-approve-10-million-emergency-funding-for-mnlars/4836625/?cat=12681>)

But MNIT said they are not in a position to spend that money on MNLARS because they are a state agency working with, and receiving money from, all state agencies.

"It would be illegal to use funding from consolidated services we provide to all agencies to fund one agency's specific IT system, like MNLARS," Crozier said.

Kiffmeyer said she intends to call MNIT's management team back before her committee after the Legislature's Easter break to sort out the office spending issue and to get an update on any MNLARS progress.

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