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Official Business

House Bill 187 Version A ***MEMBERS LEG COUNCIL; LEG BUDGET & AUDIT***

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Under Alaska Statute (AS 24.20), the Legislative Council handles essential internal operations of the Alaska Legislature, while the Legislative Budget and Audit (LB&A) Committee oversees critical state fiscal matters, including expenditures, audits, and budget analysis. Both are permanent joint interim committees designed and empowered by law to conduct business year-round, ensuring timely legislative action even outside regular sessions.

Current statutes require membership on these committees to include “at least one member from each of the two major political parties of each house.” However, the Legislature has a longstanding tradition of coalition caucuses and unaffiliated members. Moreover, the passage of ballot measure 2 in 2020 eliminated the requirement for candidates to declare a party affiliation on the ballot, allowing individuals to be elected without formal party ties.

House Bill 187 updates these outdated membership provisions to better reflect current law and practice. It ensures fair representation for all organized caucuses on the Legislative Council and LB&A Committee, promoting inclusive governance that matches Alaska’s diverse political dynamics.

This change aligns with the Alaska Legislature’s Uniform Rules, which already guarantee representation for organized minority caucuses on standing committees—defining a “minority” as at least 25% of a chamber’s membership. Currently, no such explicit protection exists for these two key interim committees, creating an inconsistency that HB 187 corrects.

All Alaskans have the right to elect their representatives, and those representatives have the right to organize into caucuses that best represent their constituents’ interests and visions. In turn, those organized caucuses deserve meaningful representation on every legislative body that shapes internal operations and state finances. HB 187 upholds this principle of fairness and equity in Alaska’s legislative process.