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A Communication From
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Sponsor Statement **HB 4**

"An Act relating to the members of the state personnel board."

In recent years, Alaska's processes for filing formal complaints against public officials have come under heightened scrutiny. The Legislature has made significant changes in the area of legislative ethics, but there is still work to be done to remove any appearance of impropriety from the complaint process for the executive branch.

Among other things, the Personnel Board is responsible for adjudicating a wide array of ethics complaints against the Governor, Lt. Governor, or Attorney General. Currently, the Governor enjoys complete autonomy to choose the people hearing these complaints, subject to their confirmation by the Legislature. The Personnel Board also typically operates on a 2:1 partisan split.

HB 4 replaces the current structure of the Personnel Board with the structure of the Alaska Public Offices Commission. So, the Personnel Board would extend from three members to five. These two additional board members will bring a broader range of viewpoints to the board.

Also, the Governor would no longer appoint whomever he or she likes, but would instead appoint nominees from lists generated by the central committees of the two parties receiving the highest number of votes in the previous gubernatorial election. The four board members chosen from these party lists would then select their own chairperson, who would be subject to approval by the Governor and confirmation by the Legislature.

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HB 4 would likely afford each major party two seats on the board and force the Democrat and Republican board members to agree upon a chairperson. This would eliminate the “yes men” perception that can stem from the board’s current 2:1 partisan make-up. HB 4 would also significantly lower the hurdle for third parties to enjoy representation on the Personnel Board. Rather than having to win the gubernatorial election, a third party would need merely to come in second or convince the existing board members to nominate an independent or third party chairperson.

It is vital that Alaskans believe the complaint process for public figures is beyond reproach. HB 4 would reinforce this notion by making the Personnel Board more independent and less partisan. I hope you will join me in supporting these important changes.