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Sponsor Statement CSHB 178

“An Act relating to election practices and procedures; and providing for an effective date.”

In 2009 Congress passed the MOVE Act which outlines procedures that make it easier for overseas military and civilians to use our electoral system. Overseas military personnel and civilians represent 61,000 of Alaska’s eligible voters. These voters face a myriad of challenges when pursuing their fundamental right to vote. Additionally, those who live in remote areas of the state experience similar challenges. In 2010 approximately 41,000 voters voted absentee in Alaska. CSHB178 increases the accessibility of our electoral system for these voters by expanding absentee voting.

CSHB 178:

- Moves the primary back 2 weeks, allowing for more time for voters to receive information. One of the greatest concerns for military and overseas voters is the amount of time to receive and return their ballot. (This assists the Department in accommodating the 45 day requirement established under MOVE)
- Removes witnessing requirements alleviating the burden of our military voters from finding a witness when stationed remotely.
- Establishes “email” in statute as a form of electronic transmission allowing for the delivery of ballots and information to be distributed via email. This is another provision that addresses the challenges of the voter to receive the ballot in a timely manner and returned.
- Changes the deadline for receipt of an overseas ballot to 10 days aligning it with the 10 day deadline for domestic absentee ballots. It also allows more time for the department to finalize ballots and send them out to our military and overseas voters. (Further assisting the accommodation of the 45 day MOVE ballot distribution time for military and overseas voters).
- Provides for the city clerk to administer absentee ballots. This further expands access options for our rural and remote voters to receive and return their absentee ballot.
- Provides the opportunity for a person who comes of age, overseas, to vote. If the parents lived in Alaska prior to going overseas their child who comes of age overseas may apply to vote absentee for federal elections in Alaska.
 - CHANGES MADE IN COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
- If a change is made regarding the eligibility of a candidate by the director, notice must be provided to the candidate, other candidates in the race and to the individual filing the candidacy complaint, if applicable. A challenge may be made to this decision within 15 days and the director must respond to the challenge within 15 days.

- All information on a declaration of candidacy, letter of intent, nominating petition is open to public inspection.

These outlined changes align our state statutes with the MOVE act as well as improve absentee voter access within our own state.

All voters deserve, and are required to have, equal access to our electoral system. CSHB 178 accomplishes this by bringing our statutes in line with federal law and greatly improving access and ease to our absentee voting system.

I urge your support of CSHB 178.