

Representative Grier Hopkins



ALASKA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sponsor Statement for House Bill 39

An Act relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of age

With the implementation of automatic registration through the PFD application, Alaska took one step closer to ensuring comprehensive voter registration. Through House Bill 39 Alaskans who are at least 16 years of age will be able to pre-register to vote, taking that effort the next step.

HB 39 focuses on facilitating and developing future generations of eligible voters, into confident and active ones. Across the United States younger voters are becoming more engaged in our electoral processes, and it now falls to us in the legislature to continue to advocate and expand opportunities for young Alaskans to make their voices heard.

HB 39 allows these citizens to voluntarily pre-register and in accordance with existing Alaska statute, become eligible to be placed on voting rolls 90 days before their 18th birthday. Current statute allows Alaskans who are 17 years old to be able to register to vote within 90 days of their 18th birthday. By expanding the statute to include citizens who are 16 years old, we create a longer period of time where young Alaskans are aware of the rights they will gain upon turning 18 and can begin to develop the habits of informed and engaged voters.

Pre-registration is increasingly common across the nation, with 23 states and the District of Columbia offering some form of preregistration before an individual turns 18. The results in these places have shown increases in younger voter participation, which leads to lifelong voters. HB 39 empowers families, communities and educators to foster civic engagement from a younger age, while also adding an additional opportunity to ensure that every citizen in Alaska is registered to vote. This simple change to Alaska's current voter eligibility requirements would afford an unique opportunity to young Alaskans to be engaged and informed about current events that they will soon be able to vote upon and thereby laying a strong foundation in civics.

As Alaskans we maintain one of the most unique and engaged political system across the country, and by ensuring early access to voter registration, materials and resources, we are ensuring greater participation from younger voters for generations to come.

Please join me in support of HB 39 and reach out to my office if you have any questions.

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