



April 21, 2021

Dear Representatives Kreiss-Tompkins, Claman, Tarr, Story, Vance, Kaufman, and Eastman:

The League of Women Voters of Alaska (LWVAK) strongly supports HB 66 as a measure to strengthen voting rights for all eligible citizens. A democratic society depends upon the right of citizens to make their voices heard in the making of public policy. For this to work to its fullest, citizens must be able to vote in a variety of methods depending upon their circumstances. HB 66 adds to the citizen's ability to vote.

Automatic voter registration (AVR) is being adopted in an increasing number of locations across the United States. In Alaska this is being done through the permanent fund dividend application process, a unique and verifiable method available to all eligible Alaskans. If new voters fall between the cracks due to the PFD residency requirement, new voters can register on the same day for state and federal elections if they meet the 30-day residency requirement. HB 66 makes this possible.

The COVID pandemic increased Alaskans' interest in voting-by-mail (VBM). HB 66 makes sure that a curing process is in place for all VBM ballots, so that corrections can be made if voters inadvertently make errors in preparing the ballot envelopes. This is an important component of any VBM process. In addition, the availability of VBM assists voters in rural areas who may have difficulty finding a polling place or getting to that place to vote.

Alaska had a strong turnout in the 2020 election, some of that driven by voting by mail. The ease of voting at home allows many who can't make it to the voting location due to childcare or work responsibilities to vote at home. This change may prove to be beneficial in other ways. We have already seen it help increase the number of voters voting, and it may give voters more time and inclination to educate themselves on the issues and the candidates.

The Alaska Division of Elections did an amazing job keeping up with the changing face of the pandemic in the effort to make voting safe. There were many safeguards in place to insure election integrity while making the voting process as available to all eligible citizens as possible. HB 66 will strengthen that commitment. The League of Women Voters of Alaska urges the Alaska Legislature to pass HB 66.

Sincerely,
Judy Andree, President LWVAK

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