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SB 43 Elections, Voting, and Campaign Finance

Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 43 improves transparency and accountability in campaign finance laws pertaining to ballot initiatives and offers solutions to help secure the integrity of our election system in Alaska to prevent the possibility of what has been commonly referred to as “ballot harvesting”. This bill is nonpartisan and provides no advantage or disadvantage to one political party over another. The goal is to prevent dark money in all elections in our state and to prevent a person with a conflict of interest from being involved with the ballot-casting process of a registered voter.

In regard to the “dark money” provisions, the bill applies the provisions in the recent Ballot Measure Two (passed in November 2020) to ballot propositions in future elections. For instance, SB 43 requires those who contribute more than \$2000 to an independent expenditure group in a calendar year to report that contribution within 24 hours; any campaign receiving more than \$2000 from an independent expenditure group must also report that contribution within 24 hours. In addition, anonymous contributions, or a contribution made under a fictitious or another person’s name to an independent expenditure group is prohibited. These provisions would help Alaskans know the true source of contributions to ballot measures, including whether a contribution is from an in-state source or from an out-of-state source. This bill effectively shines light on dark money pertaining to ballot measures and drives the shadows out of Alaska.

SB 43 also makes amendments to statute to prevent the possibility in Alaska of what is commonly referred to as “ballot harvesting”. SB 43 details who may and who may not assist a voter in completing and submitting an absentee ballot. A person who has a conflict of interest cannot help a voter fill out or be in possession of a ballot that is not theirs. The legislation includes some teeth: it makes unlawful assistance by such a person a crime punishable by up to one year of jail and a fine of up to \$10,000. Other states have closed this loophole that would allow a bad actor to take advantage of a voter; it is time for Alaska to close it as well.

The elections and voting sections of this bill clarify language to provide consistency in application, which in turn provide Alaskans with assurance and confidence. Elections are a cornerstone to our constitutional representative republic and help ensure our American form of government can continue. Because of this, during election season, we as legislators must ensure transparency and untainted funding in regard to initiatives; secondly, for the individual casting a ballot, we must ensure protection against interference by those with a conflict of interest.