



February 26, 2026

Representative Neal Foster
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol, Room 511
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Subject: Support for Senate Bill 64: Elections

Dear Rep. Neal Foster,

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives to encourage your support for Senate Bill 64: Elections. This critical legislation will remove barriers to voting, a long-overdue step to improve our election process and increase access to voting for all Alaskans.

AFN continues to be a strong advocate for voting rights and for ensuring that no matter where Alaskans live, they have equitable access to voting. Most of our communities are located off the road system and are accessible only by boat or plane, as you well know. While that remoteness is part of what makes Alaska special, it also creates real challenges for voting.

Mail service in rural Alaska can take longer and is sometimes unreliable. Polling locations have faced recurring difficulties: some communities lack an in-person voting site, ballots do not always reach hub communities or Juneau in time to be counted, and there are ongoing staffing shortages, post office closures, and limited hours across rural Alaska, to name a few.

The Alaska Federation of Natives, which has a membership of 192 federally recognized tribes, 152 village corporations, 11 Native Corporations, and 11 regional non-profits, has heard year after year about voting access – a right of every single Alaskan – and SB64 seeks to clarify and help to fix these issues.

Key important election reforms that should be included in legislation this year:

- **Rural liaisons:** this new position will assist our rural voters who continue to face numerous challenges, including recruitment of election workers, language assistance barriers, rejection of ballots at higher rates, limited postal service, and more. With the additional staff support at the Division of Elections, they can help support addressing these barriers.
- **Ballot curing:** simple mistakes on ballots can be made; it doesn't mean votes should not be counted. More than 30 other states allow ballot curing, which is correcting mistakes, so the ballot can be counted. Alaska needs to join this process to ensure all individuals' voices are counted.

- **Pre-paid postage:** postal service can be a significant challenge in Alaska. Some communities lack post offices or have limited mail services. Providing prepaid postage would help ensure ballots reach the Division of Elections and prevent voters from forgoing participation simply because they cannot find postage—something we have heard occurs in communities with limited postal access.
- **Removal of witness signature:** the most common reason for ballot rejection was the lack of a witness signature. However, the Division of Elections has stated that it does not verify signatures. In the 2024 general election, 512 ballots were discarded because of improper witness signatures, leaving voters without their voice being counted despite a most earnest intent and otherwise completed requirements.
- **Permanent absentee voting:** allowing voters to choose to receive an absentee ballot by mail each year rather than filling out the application each year.

We appreciate your consideration and swift passage of SB64.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Mallott", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ben Mallott
President
Alaska Federation of Natives