

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:
Subject: SB 63: Local Boundary Commission
Date: Wednesday, April 22, 2026 11:23:39 AM
Attachments: [SB 63 - Local Boundary Commission.docx](#)

Co-chairs Himschoot and Mears,

We have attached a write up related to Local Boundary Commissions and SB 63. We sent this in over a year ago, and although it has not been posted, we want to make sure you are aware of this information before the hearing tomorrow.

In addition to the informational write up, we'd like to note that, as written, this bill creates an even-numbered body, which can lead to tie votes and make action harder. The addition of an at-large seat (in addition to the new seat recommended in the bill) brings the total back to an odd number and allows for greater representation.

We're always happy to set up a time to discuss this matter further, at your convenience.

Thank you,

Kaitlyn Conway, MPA
Intergovernmental Affairs Manager
Alaska Municipal League
(907) 586-1325 x228
"Strengthening Alaska Municipalities"





ONE SEALASKA PLAZA, SUITE 302 • JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801
TEL (907) 586-1325 • FAX (907) 463-5480 • WWW.AKML.ORG

Member of the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties

Submitted Testimony – SB 63

SB 63 proposes changes related to the Local Boundary Commission (LBC). AML members have not taken a position regarding the Local Boundary Commission, nor this bill, so this testimony is neither in support nor opposition. AML members may individually take a position, and we encourage their individual ability to do so. However, as the LBC is so crucial to city and borough interests, we have provided this document to identify a variety of issues that are worth the Legislature’s consideration.

For SB 63, specifically, in its current form: The addition of a seat dedicated to the Unorganized Borough appears to seek greater influence related to the decisions affecting this region of the state and has the effect of increasing the representation of one region over others. If Judicial Districts already cover this expansive area, we are unsure of the intent other than to add votes in one direction.

If the intent of SB 63 is to improve governance within the Unorganized Borough, its necessity is questionable, given that judicial districts already provide a framework for representation of all Alaskans and communities. It is worth noting that the Unorganized Borough can also look to the Legislature, to act as the Assembly thereof, as AML members note in [Resolution 2020-01](#).

The documents provided for SB 63 include Research About the LBC, which highlights the fact that by placing authority in this third party, arguments for and against boundary change can be analyzed objectively. By adding a seat for one group of communities over other groups seems to remove this objectivity. Ultimately, the decisions of the LBC must have a rational foundation – the composition of the Commission should not affect their ability to interpret the applicable legal standards and evaluation of the evidence, in their *ex parte* role.

While we don’t believe that extra votes for one group of communities over another are warranted, this bill does present an opportunity for meaningful reforms to strengthen the LBC’s effectiveness in municipal governance. In fact, the research provided by the bill sponsor notes that the LBC has a continuing obligation under statutory law to:

- make studies of local government boundary problems;
- adopt regulations providing standards and procedures for municipal incorporation, annexation, detachment, merger, consolidation, reclassification, and dissolution;
 - Please note AML’s [Resolution 2021-13](#) in this regard.
- make recommendations to the legislature concerning boundary changes under Article 10, Section 12 of Alaska’s constitution.

The following responds to these considerations, and statutory obligations.

* First, AML has highlighted in the past that to ensure accountability and credibility, LBC members should be subject to legislative confirmation. This would align the commission’s composition with other state boards that have significant governance authority. It’s also consistent with law. AS 39.05.060 identifies the Local Boundary Commission as subject to legislative confirmation: “The governor shall appoint each member on the basis of interest in public affairs, good judgment, knowledge and ability in the field of action of the department for which appointed, and with a view to providing diversity of interest and

points of view in the membership. Appointments are subject to confirmation by a majority of the members of the legislature in joint session.”

We understand that the State identifies within the Constitution a list of those bodies that require confirmation, and the LBC not listed there. However, the Constitution does not prohibit the Legislature acting within its law-making authority to address future needs, which it clearly did in establishing confirmation in law. The confirmation process provides a way in which, especially for the unorganized borough, the Legislature may engage directly with nominees to better understand their competency and interests.

* Second, the LBC recently overturned decades of precedence by requiring in the case of Soldotna’s annexation a local vote vs. legislative approval. In this way, instead of making decisions reflecting the State interest, they chose local interests to prevail, counter to their duty. The Supreme Court decided in their favor, that this is within their authority, but did not speak to the overall decision-making process. The decision notes the work of the LBC staff and their preliminary report: “Addressing public comments that called for approval by local option, the preliminary report noted that setting city boundaries was “legitimately the concern of the state, and not just that of the local community.” A final staff report was issued in July 2020, concluding that the petition met requirements to pursue annexation through legislative review.” Commissioners voted instead – 3-2 – to convert the legislative review to local option.

The Court had previously concluded that the constitutional delegates believed that “local political decisions do not usually create proper boundaries and that boundaries should be established at the state level,” because “[b]y placing authority in this third-party, arguments for and against boundary change can be analyzed objectively.” Soldotna’s appeal failed because in a 1992 regulation “the commission may determine during the course of proceedings that a legislative review petition must be amended and considered as a local action or local option petition if the commission determines that the balanced best interests of the locality and the state are enhanced by local participation.”

It is worth noting that AS 29.06.040(d) describes a preference for legislative review. The Court notes that “Given the history of local boundary changes in Alaska, it appears unlikely a municipality would request that their annexation petition proceed by voter approval.” In case of point, the Court acknowledges that it is almost never the case that residents outside a municipal jurisdiction choose to be included; they benefit by proximity without having the additional burdens of taxation or rulemaking. The Opinion states that “We recognize that the circumstances of the Commission’s creation and the delegates’ underlying concern that “a small, self-interested group could stand in the way of boundary changes which were in the public interest” could weigh against requiring voter approval in many circumstances.”

As the Alaska Constitution, AS 29.06.040, and AS 44.33.812 clearly authorize, and even require, the Commission must create pathways to annexation through local action. Annexation petitions require fact-specific inquiries that take into account “the unique circumstances presented by each petition.” There are certainly compelling arguments as to why the local option should be used sparingly, especially in light of the Commission’s historical purpose to act as a check on local interests.

We bring this to your attention not to bore you with the particulars of an individual case, nor to argue for or against the merits of the plaintiff’s or Court’s arguments. However, it is in the State’s interest to clarify the process by which the LBC chooses legislative review instead of local action. The case is instructive, at the very least, inasmuch as it highlights the challenges of advancing governance in Alaska.

The clarification, perhaps, should rest on when local action may positively lead to annexation. Here, we can promote self-organization that leads to the additional inclusion within municipal boundaries such that public safety, schools, and well-being are delivered by city and borough services. On the other hand,

there are real consequences to local action that always says no, as the Constitutional Convention delegates feared and history has shown.

* Third, Alaska's Local Boundary Commission (LBC) plays a critical role in shaping the state's local governance landscape. As the body responsible for reviewing and making recommendations on municipal boundary changes, it holds a strategic position in the advancement of borough and city formation. However, the LBC has traditionally adopted a reactive posture—responding to petitions rather than proactively guiding the structure of local government. Given the unique challenges and vast geography of Alaska, there is a strong argument that the LBC should take a more active role in accelerating the transfer of municipal entitlement lands from the State to existing and emerging municipalities.

Municipal entitlement lands—granted under Article X of the Alaska Constitution and subsequent legislation—serve as a foundation for local self-governance, revenue generation, and resource management. The timely transfer of these lands enables cities and boroughs to access and manage resources necessary for economic development, infrastructure investments, and public services. Yet, many municipalities face prolonged delays and bureaucratic obstacles in receiving these entitlements, which in turn hampers their ability to function effectively. The LBC, by actively advocating for streamlined land transfer processes, could serve as a critical intermediary between the State and local governments—facilitating not only the legal framework for formation but also the practical conditions necessary for self-governance.

An enhanced role for the LBC might include issuing recommendations to the legislature or the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regarding process improvements, identifying priority areas for land conveyance in tandem with municipal formation initiatives, or hosting working groups that bring together stakeholders to align land policy with local governance needs. In this sense, the LBC's proactive engagement could help remove barriers and create incentives for the formation of new boroughs or the expansion of existing municipalities, especially in unorganized regions.

In addition to land transfer facilitation, the LBC could assume a vital role in monitoring the availability of *vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved* (VUU) lands—those not currently allocated to other governmental uses and potentially available for future municipal entitlement. These lands are essential to the viability of any newly formed borough. Monitoring their status would not only inform the strategic planning of borough formation but also ensure that sufficient land and resources remain available to support new local governments.

Whether the LBC *can* formally monitor these lands hinges on the authority granted to it by statute and regulation. Currently, the LBC does not have a mandate to manage or survey land holdings—that authority resides with the DNR. However, the LBC *should* collaborate with the DNR and other state agencies to maintain up-to-date assessments of land status. This could take the form of regular reports or joint initiatives aimed at identifying areas where borough formation is both needed and feasible based on land availability.

Ultimately, a more assertive and visionary LBC could help realize the constitutional promise of an integrated system of local government in Alaska. By accelerating land transfers and monitoring VUU lands, the LBC would not only enable the formation of more sustainable and autonomous municipalities but also ensure that local governance structures are equipped with the assets they need to thrive. This expanded role would align with the broader goals of decentralization, community empowerment, and equitable access to Alaska's land and resources.

We have highlighted before the challenges local governments face in accessing their entitlement lands. The numbers speak for themselves and are provided here for reference.

Municipality	Certified	Patented*	Approved	Conditional	Selected	Remaining	% to Finalize
<i>Aleutians East Borough</i>	7,633	576	7,208	492		0	100.88%
<i>Municipality of Anchorage</i>	44,893	21,130	3,586		1,196		10.65%
<i>City of Anderson</i>	1,182	832	349	40	135	0	44.33%
<i>Bristol Bay Borough</i>	2,898	2,699				199	6.87%
<i>City of Coffman Cove</i>	222	220		2		0	0.90%
<i>City of Cordova</i>	235	168	76		184	0	110.64%
<i>Denali Borough</i>	49,789	5,844	42,656	1,920	20	0	89.57%
<i>City of Edna Bay</i>	320		314			6	100.00%
<i>Fairbanks North Star Borough</i>	112,000	97,396	15,697		2,407	0	16.16%
<i>Haines Borough</i>	5,967	2,569	2,413	20	1,692	987	85.67%
<i>City and Borough of Juneau</i>	19,584	17,273	2,100	100		0	11.23%
<i>Kenai Peninsula Borough</i>	155,780	104,111	41,931	320	561	9,738	33.73%
<i>Ketchikan Gateway Borough</i>	11,593	11,209	812			0	7.00%
<i>Kodiak Island Borough</i>	56,500	21,090	10,431				18.46%
<i>Lake and Peninsula Borough</i>	125,000	1	99,785		42,879	25,214	134.30%
<i>Matanuska-Susitna Borough</i>	355,210	264,388	79,722	3,495			23.43%
<i>North Slope Borough</i>	89,850	4,491	20,826		12,311	64,533	108.70%
<i>Northwest Arctic Borough</i>	285,438	107,130	176,770	1,532	19,314	1,538	69.77%
<i>Petersburg Borough</i>	14,666	1,048	5,895		7,184	7,723	141.84%
<i>City of Port Alexander</i>	53	8	45			0	84.91%
<i>City of Seward</i>	565	548			30	20	8.85%
<i>Municipality of Skagway</i>	7,977	4,672	3,003	55		118	39.81%
<i>City and Borough of Sitka</i>	10,500	10,671	46			0	0.44%
<i>City of Valdez</i>	7,593	7,212	413			0	5.44%
<i>City of Whale Pass</i>	296	5	289			2	98.31%
<i>City of Whittier</i>	600	600				0	0.00%
<i>City and Borough of Wrangell</i>	9,006	2,410	6,965			0	77.34%
<i>City and Borough of Yakutat</i>	21,500	364	22,487			0	104.59%
Totals	1,396,850	688,738	542,852		87,913	110,105	53.04%

* Fourth, the issue of municipal lands held in trust, those designated under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) for future municipal governments, raises similar questions about foresight, coordination, and the role of the LBC in safeguarding long-term options for incorporation and local self-governance.

ANCSA established Alaska Native corporations and transferred large tracts of land to them, but it also included provisions that allowed for the withholding of some lands for the potential future incorporation of communities as cities. The intention was to ensure that newly formed municipalities would have access to sufficient land and resources to support governance, infrastructure, and development.

These lands have generally remained in limbo. Many communities that might have incorporated did not do so—often due to economic, administrative, or political challenges. Meanwhile, these reserved lands have been neither utilized nor integrated into long-term community or municipal planning. In recent years, Congress has considered or enacted legislation that would repatriate or release these lands back to Alaska Native village corporations, effectively closing the door on their use for future municipalities. This is not to say what should or shouldn't happen in this decision, nor in any way diminishing the benefit and value of these lands in the hands of Alaska's village corporations. We should just be clear that this will make it more difficult if not impossible for political subdivisions of the State of Alaska to be formed in these communities, unless State lands are otherwise identified. Village corporations don't have taxing authority, nor public purpose under State law. As such, contributions to public safety, education, and well-being may be limited, even as these lands are hoped to be developed for economic development, which may well lead to housing, jobs, and a more robust local economy.

The Local Boundary Commission is uniquely positioned to represent the interests of future municipalities—those that do not yet exist but that the Alaska Constitution envisioned would one day be

formed. While the LBC does not have jurisdiction over ANCSA lands, its mandate to guide and recommend municipal formation, boundary changes, and governance restructuring gives it a policy voice that could—and arguably should—have been used more forcefully in these land trust decisions. Had the LBC proactively:

- Assessed the communities most likely to incorporate in the future and documented how the lands in trust could support those governments;
- Engaged with Congress and State officials to underscore the long-term value of retaining some lands for municipal purposes;
- Published reports or held hearings that explicitly tied the fate of trust lands to Alaska’s constitutional goals of local government formation;

...it could have influenced the policy landscape more meaningfully. Even now, the LBC could issue findings or recommendations emphasizing the importance of preserving options for local self-governance and encouraging compromises or shared-use agreements that respect both Native corporation interests and municipal potential. It could also recommend State lands within these communities to offset the loss.

What’s at stake is not just land—but the future configuration of State governance in rural Alaska. If all reserved trust lands are transferred to private or corporate ownership, the practical pathway to incorporation becomes steeper for many communities, particularly those in unorganized areas. The LBC is one of the few bodies in Alaska positioned to think decades ahead about such implications.

It is important that the LBC evolve beyond a passive adjudicator of petitions into a strategic planner and public advocate for a robust municipal framework. Its independence and constitutional authority give it the legitimacy to convene stakeholders, evaluate long-term risks, and voice concern when foundational tools of governance—like land—are at risk of disappearing.

* Fifth, in 1963, Alaska took a bold and constitutionally significant step by passing the Mandatory Borough Act, a policy grounded in the state’s unique vision of local self-governance. It required certain areas to organize into boroughs, ensuring that essential services could be delivered and local needs more effectively met. The Act was transformative, shaping regional governance for much of the state. But despite its ambition, the project remains unfinished. Vast regions of Alaska remain unorganized and unincorporated, with limited or no local government presence.

As the designated body to review and recommend changes in local government structure, the LBC is uniquely positioned to develop a comprehensive strategic plan to complete the goals of the 1963 Act. Such a plan is not just overdue—it is critical to the future of governance in Alaska. It would enable the state to address long-standing disparities, close governance gaps, and build a more equitable and effective local government system.

This process does not come at the expense of local action and voice, but allows these to flourish. Ultimately, to provide for maximum local self-government is not to avoid incorporation of cities or borough formation, but to ensure that it occurs to reflect the needs, interests, and priorities of Alaskans. Failure to do so goes against the intent and charter established by Alaska’s Constitution.

Alaska’s geographic, cultural, and economic diversity challenges the one-size-fits-all approach to local governance. Communities range from urban centers like Anchorage and Fairbanks to remote, roadless villages with subsistence economies. The existing classifications—home rule, general law boroughs, and cities—may not adequately reflect the governance needs or capacities of all regions.

The LBC should lead an evaluation of new classifications of local government—such as “regional towns,” “village service areas,” or “tiered boroughs”—to create more tailored options for communities. These

could include scaled-down responsibilities, hybrid governance models, or phased transitions. The goal would be to remove the binary choice of full incorporation or none at all and replace it with a continuum of self-governance options better suited to Alaska's on-the-ground realities.

One of the key barriers to municipal organization is the lack of incentives and support. Many communities hesitate to incorporate or transition to borough status due to financial uncertainty, administrative burden, and a lack of technical capacity. A strategic plan from the LBC should propose a comprehensive package of state-backed incentives for communities that pursue incorporation or organization. These might include:

- Transitional funding to support new boroughs in their early years.
- Capacity-building grants for governance planning and staffing.
- Legal and technical assistance for petitioning and structuring.
- Shared service models to reduce startup costs and improve efficiency.

Incentivizing incorporation not only empowers local communities—it also relieves the State from providing direct services in areas that lack local government, which can ultimately improve efficiency and responsiveness.

The strategic plan should also examine innovative regional governance structures that can deliver public services efficiently while honoring the value of local control. In remote or low-population regions, a full-fledged borough may not be sustainable in the traditional sense—but intermediate models may be.

Possibilities include:

- Regional service authorities governed by local representatives.
- Multi-community compacts that share administrative structures but retain community identity.
- Decentralized boroughs with sub-regional councils embedded within the broader governance framework.

The LBC's role would be to model these structures, assess their legal viability, and consult with communities on their relevance. These governance models could increase representation, improve service delivery, and offer alternatives to remaining perpetually unorganized.

Conclusion

Sixty years after the Mandatory Borough Act and seventy since Alaska's Constitution was adopted, the vision of a comprehensive, functional local government system across Alaska remains incomplete. The Local Boundary Commission is the state's best-positioned institution to address this legacy. By developing a comprehensive strategic plan, the LBC could fulfill its constitutional mandate not only by responding to petitions, but by guiding Alaska toward a more intentional, inclusive, and effective system of local governance.

In doing so, the Commission would move from being a reactive regulator to a proactive architect of the state's municipal future—one capable of adapting to the changing needs of communities and aligning with the aspirations set out at statehood. The time for such leadership is now.

While SB 63 raises valid concerns about governance in the unorganized borough, its effectiveness would be significantly improved by expanding the LBC's role in facilitating municipal governance, land management and transfer, and strategic planning. Incorporating these revisions would ensure that the bill meaningfully contributes to improving local government capacity and accountability.

Larry D Wood
Attorney & Mediator
19640 S. Montague Loop
Eagle River, Alaska 99577
Ldwood1225@gci.net
(907) 726-7032

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

April 21, 2026

Representatives Rebecca Himschoot and Donna Mears, Co-Chairs
Members of the Committee
Community and Regional Affairs Committee, Alaska State House

Re: Risks Created by Senate Bill 63

Dear Co-Chairs Himschoot and Mears and Members of the Committee:

As chair of the Alaska Local Boundary Commission (“LBC”) I expressed our concerns related to CSHB 279, a precursor to **Senate Bill 63**. The newer version of this legislation proposes to add a sixth member to the LBC instead of replacing its at large member with a resident of the unorganized borough.

I appreciate this opportunity to repeat those concerns and to add other risks related to this modified proposal.

I write with a sense of urgency. SB 63 would substantively and procedurally impair the LBC’s ability to carry out its constitutional mandate. Sadly, all of Alaska’s constitutional framers have passed on, and no champions who share their common vision for local government in our state have emerged to carry their baton forward. In their absence, I ask that you take time to evaluate whether SB 63’s changes align with constitutional expectations they developed for us.

THE LBC’S CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION

The Local Government Committee of the Constitutional Convention recognized that local political decisions do not reliably produce sound municipal boundaries. Hence, the committee concluded that the advantage of state-level review “lies in placing the process at a level where area-wide or state-wide needs can be taken into account. By placing authority in this third party, arguments for and against [municipal] boundary change can be analyzed objectively.” The LBC was established to ensure exactly that.

From its inception, the Local Boundary Commission has therefore reflected broad geographic representation: one member from each of Alaska’s four judicial districts and one at-large member who may be drawn from anywhere in

the state. Commissioners do not “represent” the residents of their respective districts — they are required only to reside within them. In their deliberations, commissioners are charged instead with representing the interests of all Alaskans.

Critically, each judicial district has always included a portion of the unorganized borough, with the Fourth Judicial District encompassing most of it. As a result, the LBC has had one or even two commissioners residing in the unorganized borough throughout most of its history. Indeed, under current law, the Governor may appoint the entire commission from individuals residing in the unorganized borough, should circumstances warrant. This design has served Alaska well.

WHAT SB 63 PROPOSES

SB 63 would make three significant structural changes to the LBC:

First, **it would add a sixth commissioner who must reside in the unorganized borough**, expanding the commission from five to six members and extending terms from five to six years.

Second, **it would replace the current simple majority voting standard with a two-thirds supermajority requirement** for commission decisions.

Third, **it would remove the Governor’s authority to appoint the LBC chair**, substituting an internal election among commissioners.

Each of these changes, individually and in combination, poses serious risks to the commission’s integrity and effectiveness.

RISK 1: THE UNORGANIZED BOROUGH SEAT UNDERMINES STATEWIDE OBJECTIVITY

On its surface, adding a commissioner residing in the unorganized borough may appear to simply broaden representation of that geographic area. In practice, it fundamentally alters the character of the commission. Digging deeper, this change will be extremely unfair to the 90 percent of Alaska residents who live in organized municipalities.

Today, LBC commissioners reflect the state’s entire population of some 750,000 residents in their important work. Their broad appointments from the organized and unorganized boroughs have promoted inclusivity and diversity of views pertaining to local municipal boundary changes. By design, this system ensures comprehensive representation and expands the pool of qualified candidates charged to fairly and objectively apply the standards established by law and regulation for adoption of local government boundary changes from a statewide perspective. The best interests of the entire state are considered in the LBC’s work.

The existing LBC framework already ensures that the diverse insights and interests of unorganized borough residents are represented — the Governor may, and historically has, appointed commissioners residing there. SB 63 provides no meaningful additional geographic representation; it instead creates a dedicated advocacy role within a body constitutionally designed to be free of it.

The bill offers no guidance on how a commissioner so designated would discern and balance the diverse interests of the unorganized borough's roughly 75,000 residents against the statewide perspective the LBC is required to apply. Even though the unorganized borough comprises an incredible area, about one-half of Alaska, it is not a unit of local government at all. Instead, it has a transitory existence as the source of territory for communities and regions as they grow and mature – and take on local responsibility for state services such as public education, public safety, emergency services, and planning and platting just as constitutional delegates envisioned and stipulated.

Would another commissioner residing in the unorganized borough advocate for no or limited local government? Would appointments like this shift the commission away from Alaska's constitutional goal of maximizing local government participation and responsibility as communities mature? How would commissioners who already hail from the unorganized borough adjust to this redundancy?

If the LBC is opened to stakeholder representation, other constituencies — organized boroughs, the Alaska Municipal League, and taxpayer associations, among others — would have equal justification to seek a designated seat to counterbalance this influence. The commission would drift from a deliberative, statewide body toward a forum for competing special interests, directly contrary to the framers' intent.

It is also worth noting that the only instances of imposed borough formation occurred in 1961 and 1963 — and were imposed not by the LBC, but by the Legislature through its Mandatory Borough Acts. The premise that an additional commissioner from the unorganized borough is necessary to prevent unilateral LBC overreach is not supported by this historical record.

The bill may also raise constitutional concerns as *special legislation* in that it confers a structural advantage and outsized representation for one particular group within a body charged with impartial statewide decision-making.

RISK 2: THE SUPERMAJORITY REQUIREMENT WILL PARALYZE COMMISSION OPERATIONS

SB 63's proposed two-thirds voting threshold is operationally unworkable. With six commissioners, four affirmative votes would be required — not merely for significant boundary decisions, but for routine commission actions such as approving a meeting agenda. Any combination of absence, recusal, or

disagreement among commissioners could prevent the LBC from conducting even ordinary business.

Municipal annexations, incorporations, detachments, and other boundary change proceedings — processes that communities, petitioners, and state agencies invest considerable time and resources in pursuing — could stall indefinitely under this standard. There is no historical or policy basis for imposing a supermajority requirement on a five-member body that has functioned effectively under simple majority rule throughout its existence.

RISK 3: REMOVING THE GOVERNOR’S CHAIR APPOINTMENT DIMINISHES EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY

Under current law, the Governor may appoint the LBC chair from a deep pool of statewide candidates — individuals whose qualities, experience, and perspectives align with the Governor’s goals for local government in Alaska. SB 63 would replace this with a commission-elected chair, subject to the same two-thirds supermajority requirement. If commissioners cannot achieve that threshold, the commission could be left without a chair and unable to organize or proceed.

Beyond the procedural concern, this change represents a direct and unnecessary diminution of executive authority. The Governor’s ability to shape LBC leadership through the chair appointment is a legitimate expression of constitutional executive power. Removing it serves no demonstrated public interest, and the commissioners who would elect a chair will not have the broad statewide perspective that informs the Governor’s appointment decisions.

REQUEST FOR ACTION

The LBC has carried out its constitutional mission effectively under its current framework. SB 63 would compromise the commission’s objectivity, impair its ability to function, and curtail the Governor’s rightful authority. In light of the risks it poses, please lay this bill aside.

As noted, it proposes to weaken Alaska’s framework for sound, objective analysis of municipal boundary changes. Once enacted, these structural changes to the Local Boundary Commission will be difficult to undo, and their consequences will be felt by Alaskans for generations. Thank you sincerely for your continued dedication to the vitality of local government in Alaska.

Respectfully submitted,

Larry D. Wood

cc: Governor Mike Dunleavy
Local Boundary Commission

From: [REDACTED]
To: [House Community and Regional Affairs](#)
Subject: I Support SB63
Date: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 9:09:00 PM

To whom It May Concern,

My name is matt Obermiller. I am a 30+ year full time resident of Tiekel, near Kenny Lake, in the unincorporated and unorganized Copper River Basin borough.

I support SB63.

Currently, all five of the commissioners on the Local Boundary Commission are residents of cities and/or incorporated/organized boroughs and we Alaska state citizens who live in unincorporated boroughs (unincorporated boroughs are specifically recognized in the Alaska state constitution) do not have a representative with our values and interests on the LBC.

SB63 helps remedy this so I urge you to pass SB63 and start to give us a voice.

Thank you, Matt Obermiller

SB63

Public Testimony 4-16-26

My name is James Squyres. I live in the Fourth Judicial District, in the **Unorganized Borough**.

I support SB63.

When you look at Article 10, Section 3 of the Alaska Constitution it clearly states, *“The entire State shall be divided into boroughs, organized OR unorganized.”*

About **one half** of the state lies in the Unorganized Borough.

The Local Boundary Commission is currently made up of **five** Commissioners spread across the **four** Judicial Districts and one “at large” position. Currently, **ALL FIVE Commissioners are from Organized Boroughs**.

This Bill seeks to rectify this misrepresentation on the Local Boundary Commission. It would bring a broader balance of perspective, expertise and knowledge, so that Commissioners can face decisions with this **broader base**. It would be a better representation of the massive land areas that might face boundary changes or organization issues in the years to come.

I would recommend an amendment to this bill to increase the number of appointed Commissioners, from the unorganized borough, to be increased to at least **two**, still keeping the number of commissioners at 5 or 6. **Furthermore, it might be a good idea to require that at least one of them live in the unorganized borough outside an incorporated municipality for the broadest perspective.** There was an amendment on the House Floor with a predecessor to this bill, HB279, a few years ago, that got considerable support from members who are now in the majority to this effect. These recommendations, if placed in statute, in no way unbalance the Local Boundary Commission since we are only talking 2 of 5 OR 2 of 6 positions.

There is a **major concern**, that with the current makeup of the LBC, that their lack of perspective and working knowledge of the unorganized borough might lead to poor decisions. A good example of this was the full day work session held by the LBC a couple of years ago, where they were updated on a borough petition to form a new borough in the Hoonah area. The afternoon session contained numerous topics in an attempt to educate these five commissioners from the **organized borough**, about some of the fiscal metrics of the **unorganized borough**.

They pretty much admitted to drinking from a fire hose with all the information they were receiving, **when contrary to this**, a qualified commissioner, or commissioners, from the **unorganized borough** would already know about REAAs, Federal PILTs with their role in funding local governments and services inside the unorganized borough, along with the differences in how 90% of the Federal Impact Aid is passed through from schools to the state since there is no Required Local Contribution on the schools vs an organized area who gets to retain 90% of its Federal Impact Aid.

Passage of this bill, SB63, is a good exercise of your authority under Article 10, Section 6 of the Alaska Constitution to promote a fair and balanced Local Boundary Commission when it comes to issues that might affect the Unorganized Borough, by ensuring at least **one**, and with an amendment, **two**, LBC commissioners are from the Unorganized Borough.

That concludes my testimony

James Squyres
Rural Deltana

From: [REDACTED]
To: [House Community and Regional Affairs](#)
Subject: Support for SB63
Date: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 10:31:09 PM

I am writing as a concerned Alaskan resident from the Copper River Basin. Please vote "Yes" to advance SB63. Folks, such as myself, who live in unorganized boroughs need representation on the Local Boundary Commission. Thank you. -

Sincerely, Nathan Helmer

From: [REDACTED]
To: [House Community and Regional Affairs](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Support SB 63 Local Boundary Commission
Date: Tuesday, April 21, 2026 7:19:17 AM

Written Testimony in Support of SB 63 Local Boundary Commission

House Community and Regional Affairs

April 20, 2026

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of SB 63.

I have attended or listened to all the Local Boundary Commission (LBC) meetings since 2012. There has never been fair representation for the unorganized areas of Alaska during this time. It is concerning to think that there never has been since the commission was established.

The tragedies that have taken place by the LBC or by a lack of fair representation on the LBC, over decades, has affected the lives of Alaskans far greater than most think. This began with the Mandatory Borough Act of 1963 and continues to this day. The lives of Alaskans terrorized by the decisions of the LBC is substantial and this aggression is usually driven by those, often times in government, wanting more government, more control, more money, or everyone else to live like them. That ideology does not represent all Alaskans, the "Last Frontier", or the lifestyles in rural Alaska.

The Alaska Constitution, Article 10, Section 3, Boroughs, is clear. The state shall be divided into boroughs, **organized and unorganized**. Article 1, Section 2, Source of Government is clear. All power is inherent in the people, government originates with the people, is founded upon their will only, etc. I will add that most often times a form of "governance" always exists among people regardless of living in an incorporated entity or not. That form of governance is developed and established by their will. The introduction to the Alaska Constitution by original framer, John Coghill, is clear in paragraph 4. "*This document is a product of Alaska pioneers, a spirit of independence and self-government (governance). It is your guarantee that the individual will always be in charge.*" These words should resonate and be engraved in the hearts and minds of those who serve the very diverse people and lifestyles of Alaska.

After a community in Alaska experienced, fought, and succeeded opposing a very biased LBC and staff, Governor Palin appointed a Commissioner from Tok, Alaska. He served 13-years as the sole voice for the unorganized borough. One commissioner out of five was not a fair representation but was better than what was had. This gentleman retired in 2020. Since then, all LBC Commissioners have lived in organized boroughs. Currently, two are from Eagle River. For a short time after 2020, there was a commissioner who took seriously his oath of office and upheld what I stated in the previous paragraph. He served Alaskans well. Unfortunately, he relocated to a new Judicial District and was no longer able to serve in the seat he had been appointed to.

I would support an Amendment that would require two of the six Commissioners to live in the unorganized borough and one of them to reside in the unincorporated area of the unorganized borough.

Thank you for this opportunity and your attention to this matter.

This concludes my public testimony.

Pamela Goode

Greater Rural Deltana Area