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SB 52 Sponsor Statement Alaska Absentee Voter Deadline Reform Act

Senate Bill 52 adjusts Alaska’s election law to ensure timely ballot counting and reporting. The bill addresses long-standing challenges with delays in election results being available to the public by introducing key reforms to deadlines and procedures for pre-election ballot distribution by voters and post-election delivery to the division of Elections.

One of the provisions of SB 52 is the requirement that all ballots, including absentee and early voting ballots, be counted by 11:59 p.m. Alaska time on election day. This replaces previous rules that permitted counting to extend indefinitely beyond election day. Establishing this strict deadline ensures that election results are reported promptly, minimizing uncertainty, and enhancing voter confidence in the election process.

To address the handling of ballots delayed due to adverse weather or mechanical transportation issues, the bill requires that any delayed ballots be stored in transparent, secured containers monitored by video surveillance until they can be delivered as soon as conditions allow. This safeguard enhances the security of ballot handling and improves transparency, particularly in remote areas where logistical challenges are more likely to occur.

SB 52 also revises the early voting period, beginning 15 days prior to the election and ending on the Saturday immediately preceding election day. This adjustment provides election officials with time to count early ballots to meet the deadline requirement of 11:59 p.m.

By establishing clear deadlines and secure handling procedures, Senate Bill 52 creates a uniform and efficient framework to allow Alaskans to access election results in a timely fashion will boost voter confidence in our election process.