



To the Senate State Affairs Committee,

The Alaska Center is committed to building a future in which all Alaskans thrive. Clean air and water, wild salmon, renewable energy, and a healthy climate are all a part of this vision. Critically, so is a strong democracy – and democracy cannot function without a capable and independent judicial system. It is out of concern for the independence of Alaska’s judiciary that we write to voice our opposition to Senate Joint Resolution 13.

The judicial appointment process established by our constitution is carefully designed to prevent outside influences on judges’ decision-making. This system requires that nominees be chosen by a nonpartisan judicial council, then allows the governor to make the final appointment. The governor selects judges, reflecting the will of Alaskans, while the nonpartisan council acts as a moderating force to ensure that judges are highly qualified and politically neutral.

The framers of Alaska’s constitution [considered – and expressly decided against](#) – allowing the governor to appoint any candidate of his or her choosing because they were concerned about the power this would give the governor over the judiciary. Alaska’s courts regularly rule on the legality of the governor’s actions; allowing the governor to hand-pick these arbiters would compromise their ability to impartially maintain the rule of law. Moreover, giving the governor more authority over the selection process would likely lead to more partisan nominees, reducing Alaskans’ confidence in our courts. Similarly, without the extensive process of review that the judicial council uses to vet nominees, Alaska could see the quality of its judges diminished.

Alaska’s judicial system is widely regarded as a model for fairness and independence – former Chief Justice Bud Carpeneti called it “the envy of the nation”. While other states have contentious nomination battles, divisive judicial elections dominated by out-of-state spending, and highly partisan courts, Alaska delicately balances the will of the people with the need for experienced, politically neutral judges. If passed, SJR 13 would threaten this balance by giving the governor a level of power over judicial nominations unseen in any other state.

We urge you to vote no on this resolution. Thank you for your work to protect judicial independence and the future of Alaska’s democracy.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chantal de Alcuaz". The signature is stylized, with a large, sweeping "C" and a distinct "A".

Chantal de Alcuaz
Co-Executive Director