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SB 52 Sponsor Statement Alaska Ballot 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.

One of the provisions of SB 52 is the requirement that all ballots, including absentee and early voting ballots, be received by election day, with the count of all early ballots and the count of all reviewed absentee ballots included in the count on election day. The review of uncounted absentee ballots, if not completed by midnight of election day, must continue without interruption until completed. 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 include the count of all early ballots on election day and to update rolls at voting locations to ensure no one votes twice.

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. We no longer will be last in the nation to announce our results; our newly elected federal delegation members will no longer have the least seniority in their freshman class due to delayed count reports; and Alaskans will have greater confidence in our election process.