



# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## SENATE RULES COMMITTEE

### SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI, CHAIR

## CS for Senate Bill 64 (STA) Version W

### Election Reform

Senate Bill 64 enacts a comprehensive package of election reforms to ensure all eligible votes are counted, update Alaska's voter registration lists to remove ineligible voters, ensure election results are reported faster, ban the use of undisclosed deepfakes to influence elections, and improve the security and transparency of Alaska's elections. Key provisions include:

#### **Removing Barriers to Voting**

SB 64 repeals the requirement for a witness signature on absentee by-mail ballots and prevents special needs ballots from being rejected because of mistakes made by poll workers or representatives. It also allows voters to register to vote within 30 days of an election and enacts a ballot curing system to allow voters to correct mistakes that would cause their ballots to be rejected. To make it easier for voters to return their ballots, SB 64 requires secure drop boxes be made available at Division of Elections Offices and provides for postage paid return envelopes for absentee ballots.

#### **Voter Registration List Cleanup**

SB 64 will expedite the process for removing ineligible voters from the active voter lists. In 2022 it was estimated that the number of registered voters in Alaska was equal to 106% of the adult population. This bill replaces the current process of mailing two notices to voters who have not voted in the last two general elections with a single forwardable notice and requires that notices be sent to voters when they have claimed residency in another state. This bill also clarifies the definition of residency for voting in Alaska and codifies a procedure for voters to cancel their registration.

#### **Faster Election Results**

This bill contains several provisions allow election results to be reported faster and to provide more transparency during the counting process. This bill adopts national best practices for reporting ranked choice voting results by requiring preliminary ranked choice tabulations be released whenever updated results are released. Currently only first place votes are included in unofficial results released throughout the counting process. This bill

makes the counting process more transparent by requiring details of which ballots have been counted to be released with unofficial results. This bill creates a uniform deadline of 10 days after Election Day for absentee ballots to be received and requires absentee ballot review to begin 12 days before Election Day.

### **Banning Deepfakes**

This bill prohibits the use of deceptive synthetic media, commonly referred to as “deepfakes,” to influence Alaska elections. As technology has improved, it is becoming increasingly affordable to create realistic looking but false video or audio designed to deceive voters. SB 64 requires that any deepfake communication designed to influence Alaska elections clearly identify it as being manipulated and allows people defamed by undisclosed deepfakes to seek injunctive relief.

### **Secure and Transparent Elections**

SB 64 makes several reforms to improve the security, transparency, and integrity of Alaska’s elections. This bill requires the Lieutenant Governor to develop a cybersecurity program to defend Alaska’s elections records from cyber-attacks and data breaches and requires the use of tracking barcodes for absentee ballot envelopes. This bill allows all candidates and ballot proposition campaigns to appoint poll watchers and ballot review observers and to observe the state review board process and ensures that campaigns can have observers present at all ballot review tables.

Senate Bill 64 contains other provisions to modernize Alaska’s election statutes and make voting more accessible.