

Alaska State Legislature

Session:
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Office: (907) 465-2693



Interim:
145 Main St Loop
Kenai, AK 99611
Office: (907) 283-2690

Representative Justin Ruffridge District 7 - Kenai/Soldotna

HB 161 Version G Sponsor Statement

House Bill 161 addresses and corrects key issues stemming from Ballot Measure 1, which was enacted into law by Alaskan voters in 2024. While the intent of Ballot Measure 1 was to provide employees and employers with an updated approach to worker benefits, it may place a significant financial strain on small businesses. Alaskan small businesses from around the state have made requests to change Ballot Measure 1, and their concerns are reflected and addressed in the creation of HB 161. This legislation ensures that Alaska statutes align with our state's unique economic landscape while maintaining the core principles of worker protection.

The bill refines the paid sick leave requirements established under Ballot Measure 1 by adjusting the accrual threshold, clarifying employer responsibilities, and ensuring that businesses can effectively comply without undue burden. Specifically, HB 161 corrects the threshold for paid sick leave accrual, shifting the requirement from small businesses to only those with 50 or more employees. The bill also exempts small businesses from the requirement to provide seasonal workers – a strong and mighty part of Alaska's economy – with paid sick leave and enhances enforcement mechanisms to prevent misuse while maintaining worker protections.

The revisions in HB 161 are essential to preserving our small businesses and local workforce, allowing both to thrive in balance. To effectively support our worker population, we must first ensure that small businesses can prosper, creating and sustaining jobs for Alaskans.