

Joe Hayes

From: Susan A <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2025 3:25 PM
To: Senate State Affairs
Cc: Sen. Scott Kawasaki
Subject: SB70

Susan Allmeroth
Two Rivers
Myself

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in strong opposition to SB 70. While elections should be secure and efficient, this bill creates unnecessary barriers to voting, removes essential safeguards, and expands executive overreach in ways that could undermine public trust. Instead of making it harder for Alaskans to vote, our laws should protect access, transparency, and fairness. It grants excessive power to the executive branch, disenfranchises marginalized Alaskans, and makes voting more difficult rather than more accessible. Instead of limiting voter participation, Alaska should be improving election security and fairness by strengthening Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) and making elections more accessible.

Executive Overreach: SB 70 Grants Excessive Power to the Governor

This bill significantly expands the Governor's control over Alaska's election system, undermining nonpartisan election oversight and threatening public trust in our democracy.

Partisan Control Over Election Officials: SB 70 gives the Governor more authority to appoint and remove key election officials, increasing the risk of politically motivated interference. Election administration should be handled independently, not dictated by any one political party.

Interference with Ballot Certification: The bill allows the Governor to influence election certification, which could result in delays, conflicts of interest, or even efforts to overturn results. This threatens the integrity of free and fair elections.

Potential Repeal of RCV Through Executive Power: Rather than allowing voters to decide the fate of RCV, SB 70 opens the door for unilateral changes to election methods based on political pressure. The decision to change RCV should remain with Alaskans, not politicians.

Recommendation: Elections should be independent of the Governor's influence to prevent partisan manipulation. Nonpartisan election officials, not political appointees, must oversee Alaska's democratic process.

SB 70 Disenfranchises Marginalized Alaskans

This bill would disproportionately impact Alaska Native, rural, low-income, military, elderly, and disabled voters—the very communities that already face challenges in accessing the ballot box.

Alaska Native and Rural Voters: Eliminating in-person voting for communities with fewer than 750 residents forces rural voters to travel hundreds of miles or rely on unreliable mail service.

Low-Income Workers: Shortened registration and ballot submission deadlines harm voters working long hours, with limited access to transportation or documentation.

Military Voters: Alaska's high military population depends on absentee ballots. Restricting deadlines could result in votes not being counted.

Elderly & Disabled Voters: Removing PDF voter registration hurts those with mobility issues, visual impairments, or lack of internet access.

Recommendation: Instead of restricting voting access, Alaska must ensure every voter—regardless of geography, income, or ability—has an equal opportunity to participate.

Oppose Shortened Deadlines & Voting Barriers

SB 70 ignores Alaska's unique geography and infrastructure.

Shortening registration and ballot deadlines harms voters in remote communities where mail service is slow and unreliable.

Removing PDF voter registration discriminates against rural and disabled voters who cannot easily access a physical elections office.

Eliminating in-person voting in smaller communities disenfranchises entire villages.

Recommendation: Maintain accessible registration and ballot submission deadlines to protect the rights of all Alaskans.

Oppose Private Payments to Election Officials

Private payments to election officials open the door to outside influence, bias, and corruption.

Elections should be fully state-funded to ensure impartiality and maintain public trust.

Recommendation: Elections must remain free from private financial influence and fully funded by the state.

Ranked Choice Voting Strengthens Democracy – SB 70 Endangers It

Alaska's Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) system was implemented by voters to ensure fairer, more representative elections. RCV:

Prevents "spoiler" candidates and wasted votes by allowing voters to rank multiple choices.

Encourages positive campaigning and reduces extreme partisanship.

Ensures majority support for winning candidates.

Instead of rolling back voter-approved election methods, Alaska should expand RCV statewide and improve voter education on how it works.

Recommendation: Keep and strengthen Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) as a means of making elections more representative and accountable.

Elections Should Be Easier, Not Harder

Rather than restricting voting, Alaska should improve access by:

Making Election Day a paid state holiday (with proof of voting) to ensure all workers can participate.

Expanding in-person voting locations, especially in rural communities.

Strengthening mail-in voting options to help military, elderly, and remote voters.

In conclusion SB 70 is a dangerous step backward for Alaska's democracy. It expands executive power, limits voter access, and disproportionately harms marginalized communities. Instead of suppressing votes, we should be making elections fairer, more secure, and more accessible for all Alaskans.

I urge you to reject SB 70 and instead focus on policies that empower voters, maintain nonpartisan election oversight, and protect our democratic process.

Thank you

