

Ballot Measure 1 - 05LEGS

90-DAY SESSION LIMIT FOR LEGISLATURE

BALLOT LANGUAGE

This initiative would reduce the maximum length of a regular legislative session from 121 days to 90 days.

SHOULD THIS INITIATIVE BECOME LAW?

☐ Yes

☐ No

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY SUMMARY

This measure limits the length of a regular session of the legislature. The session may last only ninety days. The limit will not apply to the next regular session. It will apply to other sessions in the future.

STATEMENT OF COSTS AND REVENUES FOR BALLOT MEASURE 1 – INITIATIVE 05LEGS – Prepared by the Legislative Affairs Agency

As required by AS 15.58.020 (6) (c) the Legislative Affairs Agency has prepared the following statement of costs and cost savings to the Legislative Affairs Agency of implementing the law proposed in Ballot Initiative 05LEGS.

The initiative would limit regular sessions of the Legislature to 90 days, including the day the legislature first convenes in that regular session. The 90 day limit would take effect beginning with the second regular session of the 25th Alaska Legislature in January 2008.

The Legislative Affairs Agency would realize a cost savings of \$700,000 per year due to shortening the existing 121 day session to 90 days. However, shortening the regular session to 90 days may or may not result in more frequent special sessions so that legislators can work on single subject legislation, or work on legislation that did not make it through the process during the regular session. If more special sessions were held, the \$700,000 cost savings realized by shortening the session, would be offset by the costs of holding more frequent special sessions.

FULL TEXT OF THE PROPOSED LAW

An Act relating to a 90-day regular session of the legislature; and providing for an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

*Section 1. AS 24.05.150 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

The text of this bill is presented as submitted by petition sponsors.

(b) The legislature shall adjourn from a regular session within 90 consecutive calendar days, including the day the legislature first convenes in that regular session.

*Sec. 2 This act takes effect on the first day of the second regular session of the 25th Alaska Legislature.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

Why limit the Alaska legislative session to a 90 day duration?

This is the most asked question we get when discussing our voter initiative.

The advantages are many and too numerous to list in the limited space made available in this election pamphlet, but here are some of the major advantages to a 90 day session.

First, we save 30 days of per diem and expenses of operation of the legislature - paper, copy costs, transportation, etc.

Secondly, twenty-seven other states in the U.S. have a shorter session than Alaska (remember this figure when people tell you we would not have adequate time to do our work).

Third, since 1990, legislation has been introduced twenty-four times and none of the bills have gotten to the floor of either body for action.

All voters should understand that a 90 day session limit would in no way restrict the legislature from calling itself into special session to meet specific needs of the state. The Governor also has the ability to call the legislature into special session, as he has done the last two years.

Finally, we would like to quote a very compelling piece from the Juneau Empire, which stated the following:

"Reducing the time away from family and other work also might encourage people to run for office. Competition and choice only helps the democratic process and ultimately might boost the caliber of candidates"

Submitted by one of the Petition Sponsors

Senator Tom Wagoner
Senate District Q

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STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION

If you like power-wielding committee chairs, special interests, and high-paid lobbyists, you're going to love Ballot Measure 1. This proposed change to Alaska's statutes would play right into their hands.

On the other hand if you like your Legislature truly representative and dedicated to listening to the people of Alaska on issues that affect their lives, rights, resources, and revenues then Ballot Measure 1 deserves a "NO" vote on your ballot November 7.

Here's why:

Most Alaskans want meaningful, beneficial bills to be respectfully considered during the course of the regular sessions of each Legislature. They want appropriate committees in each house to have time to schedule hearings so that members can study legislation, hear Alaskan citizen testimony and experts, then intelligently vote their recommendations and send the bills on to the next committee of referral, if any. Some important, many-faceted bills may require consideration and recommendations from as many as three committees. A natural resources measure, for instance, may require referrals to Resources, Judiciary, and Finance.

Here's where the special interests and power brokers come in. If a bill is filed that is not to their liking there are two ways they can kill it.

First is the honorable way, by participating in honest, forthright testimony in committees, and by presenting their views to members of each house before a vote on each house floor. Of course, for an outcome to their liking they will need to round up enough negative votes (20 "nays" in the House, 10 in the Senate) to cause the bill to fail passage.

The other, easier way for the well-heeled, well-connected lobbyist or interest group is to find a friendly, sympathetic committee chair who will either outright refuse to bring up a bill for committee consideration and advancement or kill it with kindness by scheduling multiple strung-out hearings or by holding it for "more study."

What does this have to do with session limits? Obviously, the shorter the allowable session, the easier it is to stall a good bill's progress until the legislative session clock runs out. Hence the enthusiasm for Ballot Measure 1 among special interests and legislator power brokers.

Remember this: the more you limit the legislature's time to do its legitimate business, the more you limit the opportunity of Alaskans to hear the facts and share their expertise.

And by the way, session-limiting statutes don't even work. Ever since the current 120-day session went into effect in 1985 every single Legislature has had to be called back into special session one, two, or even three more times!

This is expensive and wasteful. The people of Alaska deserve better.

Please vote "NO" on Ballot Measure 1!

Mike Miller, Juneau
Former Majority Leader, Alaska House of Representatives

Niilo E. Koponen, Fairbanks
Former Chair, Committee on Health, Education, & Social Services

Sam Cotten, Anchorage
Speaker of the House 1989-1990

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