



ALASKA FEDERATION
OF NATIVES

February 11th, 2013

Representative Bob Lynn
Chairman of the House State Affairs Committee
State Capitol Room 108
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Opposing HB 3: PHOTO IDENTIFICATION VOTING REQUIREMENT

Dear Representative Lynn,

On behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), I am writing to express our opposition to HB 3, an Act requiring photo identification at the polls and relating to the counting of absentee and questioned ballots. The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska representing more than 120,000 Alaska Natives residing in Alaska, 12 regional tribal consortiums, 12 regional corporations and over 180 tribes and villages. AFN mission is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community. One of AFN goals is to advocate for Alaska Native people, their governments and organizations, with respect to federal, state and local laws.

Alaska, like at least 29 other states, already has a voter ID law on the books. The current law requires proof of identification, but allows non-photo IDs to suffice (e.g., voter registration cards, birth certificate, hunting and fishing license or a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or other government document) when the ID exhibits the voter's name and current address. The current law also allows an election official to waive the ID requirement if the worker knows the voter. HB 3, on the other hand, would require a voter at the polls to produce one form of personal identification that contains a photograph or two pieces of personal identification that do not contain a photo. The list of permitted documents is considerably more restrictive than the current law. While personal identification requirements can still be waived, HB 3 would require two officials instead of one to verify that they know the voter, and the voter's name is on the official registration to vote in that precinct.

We strongly believe Alaska's current law makes sense and should not be amended to add a photo ID requirement. Our state has no history of voter fraud and adding a photo ID requirement will put an undue burden on those voters who live in remote parts of the State. In many remote communities in Alaska, which are predominately Alaska Native, residents do not need a driver's license or other forms of photo ID. Obtaining a government-issued photo ID takes time, money, and often requires the individual to travel a great distance since there is no state office in the community that issues government photo IDs. In addition, in urban areas those individuals least likely to have photo IDs tend to be the poor, people of color, women and the elderly. To our knowledge, no one in Alaska has been tried for impersonating another voter, which demonstrates that voter fraud is not a significant problem and that a photo ID law is not necessary. In fact, in the context of Alaska, requiring an individual from a rural community in Alaska to go to the expense of obtaining a photo ID when it is not otherwise needed is unreasonable, and likely unconstitutional.

The State of Alaska already requires one form of ID or a waiver by an election official if the election official knows the identity of the voter. AFN believes that the measures already in place adequately protect against voter fraud and do not disenfranchise Alaska Natives, other minorities, citizens with disabilities and the elderly who cannot easily obtain a government-issued photo ID.

In closing, we strongly oppose HB 3, and urge you to withdraw the bill. Please feel to contact me regarding this matter at any time by contacting AFN at afninfo@nativefederation.org or calling 907-274-3611. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Julie Kitka
President

Cc: Senator Donny Olson
Representative Edgmon
Representative Keller
Representative Gattis
Representative Hughes
Representative Millett
Representative Kreiss-Tomkins