



Senator Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Legislature

Senate District P

Senate Bill 138 Sponsor Statement

“An Act relating to elections; relating to voters; relating to voting; relating to the crime of unlawful interference with voting in the first degree; relating to campaign signs; relating to the reporting of financial and business interests by certain municipal officers and former officers and candidates for municipal office; relating to the Redistricting Board; and providing for an effective date”

Over 360,000 Alaskans voted in the 2020 election making it the election with the greatest participation in Alaska history. Yet 173,000 Alaskans were eligible to vote or registered to vote but did not. Senate Bill 138 seeks to build upon the participatory success of the 2020 election by strengthening the voter registration system, tightening residency requirements, paying postage for by-mail absentee ballots, and requiring the Alaska Division of Elections to offer absentee voters the option to fix errors in their ballots. This bill facilitates participation for those legally eligible to vote and ensures the integrity of elections by updating absentee ballot verification and curing.

Currently, voters are not notified of errors in their absentee ballots until after the election is certified. Over 7,500 ballots were rejected in the 2022 special primary election, a 4.55% rejection rate. That’s about 1/20 ballots. On average, if we all in this room had voted by mail, the Division of Elections would have rejected at least one of our ballots without notifying us until it was too late.

Therefore, SB 138 establishes a ballot tracking system and a ballot curing process. The ballot curing process requires the Division to notify voters if the signature on their ballot does not match the one on their registration.

Other updates to the election system include:

- requiring the Division of Elections to count absentee ballots starting at least seven days before election day and beginning to release vote tallies at 8pm on election day,
- tightening and clarifying residency requirements for voting in order to clean Alaska’s voter rolls,
- replacing the witness signature requirement with a signature verification system and requiring the Division of Elections to ballot cure for signature discrepancies,
- pre-paying vote by mail postage and allowing a verifiable date sent (such as a USPS bar code), rather than the post marked date, to serve as the date on which the voter voted,
- making explicit what happens when someone votes twice and maintaining that it is a crime to intentionally vote more than once.

Voting rights are fundamental to American democracy, which works best when eligible voters can participate and have the freedom to choose our elected leaders. Optimizing and strengthening our voting system ensures that these freedoms and rights prevail.

I respectfully urge your support of SB 138. Please reach out to my office with any questions.

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