

Joe Hayes

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 10:59 PM
To: Senate State Affairs
Subject: SB64 public comment

I am an Alaska resident registered to vote in Juneau, AK. I have experience working polls during elections. I am submitting comment on SB64 Elections on behalf of myself, not representing any group nor employer.

I request that my comments below be distributed to the current committee's members and the members of all future committees and bodies that will consider this bill during this session.

Though I am aware (S) STA mwt today and adopted Version H, it does not appear that version is yet available for public viewing online. As such, my comments correspond to sections, pages, and lines published as Version A and its accompanying Sectional Analysis, both dated 30 JAN 2025.

In general, I support much of the bill, but I have some concerns and suggested amendments. Election integrity begins and ends with the chain of custody of official ballots and veracity of verification processes. It is critical that we have equal opportunities to cast our ballots and a clear, defensible process with fair rules established and agreed upon in advance. Anything less undermines the validity and disenfranchises eligible voters.

Sections 2 and 5: Support, with proof of established residency as defined elsewhere in statute.

Section 3: Amend. The legal minimum voting age shall remain 18 years. Although I see no valid reason a 16yo would need to preregister to vote, I do support a 17yo preregistering if they will be 18yo on or before the polls close on election day and if they also meet all other eligibility requirements.

Add an amendment to specify that registration forms may not be premarked with any party or affiliation.

Amend items establishing residency for voter eligibility and casting ballots to require, at minimum, photo identification and manual signature or witnessed mark for all registrations, applications, requests for ballots, sealed outer envelopes containing ballots legally handled by others on behalf of an eligible voter, and forms for legally curing ballot deficiencies.

Sections 4 and 6: Oppose. All ballots shall be submitted on paper and retained in a secure facility for an established period of time after an election for the purposes of recounts and validation checks. Because they are not unique and cannot be verified, under no circumstances shall electronic signatures consisting of typed text (including signature-like typefaces) be accepted for the purposes of voting, especially without definitions, established verification processes, and verifiable witnesses.

Add an amendment to affirm elections shall occur on a single, established day on which all ballots shall be counted. Ballots collected before the polls open on election day shall not be opened nor counted except to access the sealed outer privacy envelope to verify receipt and eligibility and provide tracking. All ballots submitted early shall be made on an official ballot, placed in a sealed, marked, and traceable envelope, and remain unopened and uncounted in a secure, on-site ballot box in an official polling place or Division of Elections Office until polls open on election day. Ballots created outside polling hours on election day using an approved, secure, on-site, electronic device provided for handicap accessibility shall likewise be printed on site, sealed, marked, and stored unopened on site until polls open on election day. All ballots received on or after the date of issuance of valid, requested absentee ballots and before the polls close on election day shall be counted on election day or within a stated number of days established in statute.

Section 20: There appears to be a typographical error on page 12, line 04. The phrase "shall not" must replace "shall" as it is nonsensical and in conflict with other sections of the statutes to allow a person to vote the questioned ballot in this

circumstance if they do not surrender the absentee ballot since there would be no way to timely verify that they cannot submit multiple ballots.

Sec. 23: Support with amendment to strike "and assist" from page 13, line 24. While they may witness the count, under no circumstances shall a candidate nor campaign's representatives or watchers officially count or directly handle any ballots (except their own single ballot).

Sec. 25: Oppose removing the requirement for a witness for ballots cast outside an official polling place. Witnesses are vital to verifying the validity and custody of an official ballot.

Sec. 28: Oppose. Ballots shall be marked on and with the date received at an official polling place, post office, or Division of Elections Office. Ballots not marked and received by the date and time polls close on election day shall be marked invalidated due to tardiness and shall not be counted. Ballots lawfully deposited in an official drop box before polls open on election day shall be marked as received on the next business day.

Sec. 29: Oppose. Absentee ballots, while important for residents that are unable to vote in person for allowable reasons, are vulnerable and must be requested and validated for each election. Absentee ballots should not be the norm and official ballots should not leave the custody of election officials without specific, validated requests. Automatic mailing of ballots not specifically requested by an eligible absentee voter through the required process shall be invalidated and not counted.

Sec. 30: Oppose. Ballots may be validated in advance using the sealed outer envelope, but shall not be opened, counted, nor reported until polling places open, except that the number received to date may be publicly reported and the voter may track receipt of their own ballot at any time.

Sec. 31: Oppose. Upon receipt at a polling place or Division of Elections Office, ballots received outside polling hours on election day shall be marked received with the date and time. Ballots not received and marked as such by the closing of polls on election day shall be invalidated and shall not be counted. Ballots received during polling hours on election shall be placed in a secure ballot box on site and do not require receipt markings under this section except where required by other statutes.

Sec. 34: Amend to include that the cure for a rejected ballot shall include a valid witness with contact information and signature for verification purposes.

Sec. 35: Oppose. Balloting by mail and early voting shall not be the norm. Postal boxes shall suffice for authorized absentee ballots returned by mail. Drop boxes shall be limited to those secured inside a polling place or official Division of Elections Office during a defined period of time beginning upon issuance of the first, valid absentee ballot for that election and ending when polls close on election day. Ballots placed in such dropboxes shall be marked as required in Sec. 31 of this bill and remain sealed in a secure ballot box in the custody of an official polling place, Division of Elections office, or authorized officer thereof. Routine mail-in balloting and drop boxes are unnecessary and present vulnerabilities to the chain of custody and integrity of a ballot. In addition, ballots out of custody of election officials, such as those mailed out, lack witnesses to ensure secret ballots without fraud or duress (such as in the case of domestic violence).

Sec. 39: Amend to remove distances or viewing from any type of highway as long as the sign is located fully on private property and not within a public easement or right of way; is not displayed for compensation; and is not erected for a period exceeding 30 calendar days before through 3 calendar days after the election in which the candidate or question are deliberated. Specify limitation of not more than one sign of the stated maximum size per legally defined parcel. Allow for Department to apply fines for noncompliance.

Sec. 43: Citing the recent candidate incarcerated in another state who had never established residency in Alaska, add an amendment to require all candidates be legal residents on the date of registration for candidacy and meet all other

eligibility requirements. Require that write-in candidates be legal residents on or before the date of election. In order to appear on the ballot, all candidates shall be registered and deemed eligible for a stated minimum number of days before an election day.

Add an amendment to require the names of registered write-in candidates not be openly displayed at a polling place except in the same size, color, font, frequency, and manner of other candidates appearing on the sample or official ballot. To avoid electioneering, unregistered write-in candidates shall not be displayed at a polling place.

Thank you for your consideration.

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