



NATIVE MOVEMENT

Building Healthy & Sustainable Communities
www.nativemovement.org

January 28, 2025

To: Alaska State Senate Affairs
From: Enei Begaye Peter, Executive Director
Re: Support for SB-64

Dear Honorable Alaska Senators,

We are writing to express our support for SB-64, the elections omnibus bill, that expands voting rights and voting access for Alaskan voters. Native Movement is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to building people power, rooted in an Indigenized worldview, toward healthy, sustainable, and just communities for all. Native Movement is a partner in a coalition of Alaska-based nonprofits and community groups working together to strengthen democracy through the collective power of voting. Through voter engagement and non-partisan education, we empower Alaskans in every community to participate in elections at every level. Our work aims to address any undue barriers facing Alaskans at the ballot box creating a voting system that is fully accessible to all Alaskan voters. We seek to ensure that all eligible Alaskans — whatever their political persuasion — can exercise their right to vote and that all valid votes are counted. We believe that if all eligible Alaskans are able to exercise their right to vote, the democratic process can flourish.

SB-64 makes improvements to Alaska's election system that will increase access to voters who have historically faced undue barriers to accessing their right to vote, and remedies to these known challenges are long overdue.

Native Movement, along with the Voter Hub Policy Working Group, has highlighted the following provisions as critically needed improvements to Alaska's election systems:

- **The removal of the witness signature requirement**

The witness signature requirement is an unnecessary element of absentee ballots. Given that the state does not verify signatures, this requirement is an unnecessary and outdated step that disempowers Alaskan voters. This was evident in the 2022 statewide primary election that was conducted by mail, when thousands of votes were not counted due to missing signatures, and again in the 2024 general election with over 500 ballots being rejected. Removing this requirement would simplify the process and allow eligible voters the opportunity to more seamlessly cast their ballots by mail, and to ensure that their valid vote is counted.

- **The addition of a ballot curing process**

Allowing voters the opportunity to fix honest mistakes made when casting their ballot by mail ensures that all Alaskans have equitable access to the voting process, regardless of where they

live. The 2022 vote-by-mail special primary election is evidence that the lack of a ballot curing process has disenfranchised Alaskan voters. In this election, nearly five percent of ballots were rejected, and rejection rates were higher in precincts with greater percentages of minority voters. Many of these ballots were rejected because the voter identifier did not match the voter record, no identifier was provided, or because a voter did not sign the ballot. Establishing a system that gives voters an opportunity to cure — most notably a system whose timeline and mechanics works for all Alaskan voters — gives these voters the opportunity to fully exercise their right to vote.

- **Establishing same-day voter registration**

Allowing voters to register on election day has been shown to increase voter turnout overall and is especially beneficial to transient populations and young and low-income voters. Allowing voters to register to vote and update their registration up-to and on election day, creates a voting system that is more accessible and more equitable to Alaskan Voters and modernizes the state's systems to be aligned with 23 other states and Washington DC. While Alaska allows for same day registration when casting a ballot for presidential candidates, expanding this opportunity to include statewide elections further empowers Alaskan voters.

- **Postal Service in Rural Alaska**

Working with our US delegation to remedy the poor and in some cases non-existent postal service in rural Alaska where absentee ballots are the only option for voting.

Thank you for your hard work making Alaska's elections work for everyone. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

With gratitude,



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