



Secure Democracy
USA

H.B. 43 Will Strengthen Voter Freedom and Confidence in Secure Alaska Elections

February 5, 2025

Dear Chair Carrick and esteemed members of the House State Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 43. My name is Peter Skopec, and I am the director of advocacy for Secure Democracy USA. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to building stronger elections, state by state.

We believe strengthening election security and improving voter access are not mutually exclusive goals; rather, both are necessary to preserve and build public trust in our elections. Since 2022, we have worked with members of this committee and your colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pursue these shared goals in order to make it easy for eligible Alaskans to vote – and hard to cheat.

H.B. 43 contains a number of commonsense reforms to strengthen election administration and voter confidence in Alaska. Among those reforms, we want to highlight and applaud that this bill would:

- **Create a uniform statewide cure process** for absentee ballots, adding an important procedural layer of voter verification to bolster security and confidence.
- **Eliminate Alaska’s burdensome and ineffective witness requirement** for absentee by mail ballots, which disproportionately impacts rural voters.
- **Modernize voter registration and absentee voting** to allow eligible Alaskans to vote more securely and confidently.
- **Improve absentee ballot processing and transparency of unofficial results**, which will help to report results faster. Voters will also be better able to follow along as unofficial results are updated until the final results are certified.

Every eligible voter should have the freedom to cast their ballot securely and conveniently, the confidence in knowing their vote was counted, and the certainty that reported election results are accurate and trustworthy. H.B. 43 brings Alaska’s election system in line with several best practices for election administration, transparency, and accountability, as outlined below.

Creating a uniform statewide cure process

Cure processes allow elections officials to contact voters to correct common, honest mistakes on their absentee ballot certificates, such as a missing signature. A strong cure process enables election officials who are uncertain about a ballot's validity to directly contact the voter to verify their identity and confirm they cast the ballot in question. This process adds another layer of security to protect against, or identify, any cases of fraud or illegal voting.

In total, 32 states across the political spectrum – including large western and rural states like Montana, Utah, and North Dakota – notify and give voters the opportunity to cure ballots with minor mistakes.

Eliminating Alaska's burdensome and ineffective witness requirement

Current law requires an absentee voter's ballot certificate to be notarized or witnessed. This process is unnecessarily burdensome – particularly for rural, senior, and military voters – compared to other, equally effective forms of ballot verification. Most states – including many western, rural states with high absentee participation rates – allow voters to return their absentee ballot by providing identifying information subject to verification by election officials, such as a voter's signature, address, and/or date of birth.

Modernizing the voter registration and absentee voting process

H.B. 43 proposes a number of other improvements that would make the state's voter list more accurate and allow eligible Alaskans to exercise their freedom to vote with confidence. Most notably, this bill would expand Alaska's continuous registration process – which is currently only available for voting in presidential elections – to allow eligible Alaskans to register to vote (or update their existing registration) through Election Day. H.B. 43 would also provide postage-paid return envelopes to absentee voters.

Improving absentee ballot processing

H.B. 43 would expand the number of days for officials to pre-process absentee ballots, requiring the secure review and verification of eligible absentee ballots to begin 10 days before Election Day, instead of the current seven day requirement. This would help ensure faster results and provide officials with greater flexibility on Election Day.

In totality, these modernizations are absolutely essential for bolstering Alaskans' trust and confidence in elections, as well as increasing their freedom to vote. We are happy to provide the committee with any additional information, including the application of these provisions in other states.

We thank you again for the opportunity to submit this written testimony and respectfully urge you to support this legislation's much needed reforms.

Sincerely,

Peter Skopec

Director of Advocacy

Secure Democracy USA

Secure Democracy USA is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization building stronger elections, state by state. We advocate for practical election policy solutions guided by research and supported across the ideological spectrum.