

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

January 31, 2005

1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Thomas Wagoner
Senator Johnny Ellis
Senator Albert Kookesh

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 14

"An Act relating to municipal initiative and referendum elections."

MOVED SB 14 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 14

SHORT TITLE: MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) STEVENS G

01/11/05	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 12/30/04
01/11/05	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/11/05	(S)	CRA
01/26/05	(S)	CRA AT 1:30 PM FAHRENKAMP 203
01/26/05	(S)	Heard & Held
01/26/05	(S)	MINUTE(CRA)

WITNESS REGISTER

Linda Murphy, Clerk
Kenai Peninsula Borough
144 North Binkley Street
Soldotna, AK 99669

POSITION STATEMENT: Supports SB 14

Mona Lisa Drexler, Clerk
Fairbanks North Star Borough
PO Box 71267
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707
POSITION STATEMENT: Supports SB 14

Bonnie Williams, Legislative Liaison
Fairbanks North Star Borough
PO Box 71267
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707
POSITION STATEMENT: Supports SB 14

Kathy Wasserman, Policy and Program Coordinator
Alaska Municipal League
217 Second Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801
POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of SB 14

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at [1:31:39 PM](#). Present were Senators Stedman, Kookesh, Ellis and Chair Gary Stevens. Senator Wagoner arrived momentarily.

SB 14-MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

CHAIR GARY STEVENS announced the first order of business to come before the committee was SB 14. He explained that the bill gives local municipalities an option when there is a referendum or initiative to hold the election at the time of a regularly scheduled election if the issue isn't urgent or to hold a special election if the issue is timely.

[1:32:35 PM](#)

The bill would avoid costly special elections that frequently result in low voter turnout. He reported the bill has wide support from municipalities and communities across the state.

He noted supporting letters in members' packets from City and Borough municipal clerk, Laurie Sica, and from Wrangell.

He asked Linda Murphy whether she had anything to add to her previous testimony.

[1:33:25 PM](#)

LINDA MURPHY, Kenai Peninsula Borough clerk, said she had no additional comments, but she was concerned with Senator Wagoner's proposed amendment. She asked that he introduce a separate bill so that each issue could be argued on its own merit. She said the proposed amendment is sure to be controversial and the Kenai Peninsula Borough would be opposed to it.

[1:34:19 PM](#)

SENATOR WAGONER announced that he wouldn't introduce an amendment at this time and furthermore he hadn't found too many clerks that even understand what his amendment would have been or how the process works.

CHAIR GARY STEVENS asked Ms. Drexler whether she had anything to add to her previous testimony.

[1:35:08 PM](#)

MONA LISA DREXLER, Fairbanks North Star Borough clerk, said she had no additional testimony, but she wanted to clarify that a special election in the Fairbanks North Star Borough costs between \$60,000-\$66,000 rather than \$30,000 as was stated at the previous hearing.

With regard to Senator Wagoner's proposal, she said she respects his right to introduce any legislation dealing with any area of state law, but she respectfully requests he do so in a separate bill.

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MS. DREXLER reported that her borough saw a 49.9 percent all time high voter turnout in 1982 during a regular election. At issue was hours of sale for alcoholic beverages. The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) has made it difficult for municipalities to get higher turnouts and this is particularly true for boroughs with a transient population such as military bases. The presidential election is the only election that it's been possible to attain a 60 percent voter turnout.

[1:38:01 PM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS WAGONER told Ms. Drexler that the municipal clerks' representative should stop by his office because they obviously don't understand what his proposed amendment would have done. It has nothing to do with a 60 percent vote at the time of the election, he asserted.

CHAIR GARY STEVENS restated for the record that the matter before the committee was SB 14 and there was no amendment. He asked that discussion be limited to the original bill.

[1:39:23 PM](#)

BONNIE WILLIAMS identified herself as the legislative liaison for the Fairbanks North Star Borough. She said the issue was of great concern last year and they would like it to pass this year. It's straightforward and simple and assumes that municipal assemblies will have the best interest of their community in mind.

CHAIR GARY STEVENS thanks Ms. Williams for her comments and for the work done by the clerk's office.

[1:40:23 PM](#)

KATHY WASSERMAN, Alaska Municipal League representative, spoke in support of SB 14. "The bill allows for public participation and process while yet being mindful of the costs that are incurred with special elections," she said.

CHAIR GARY STEVENS noted there was no additional testimony and asked for a motion.

[1:41:26 PM](#)

SENATOR WAGONER motioned to move SB 14 from committee with two attached fiscal notes and individual recommendations. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Gary Stevens adjourned the meeting at [1:41:53 PM](#).