

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 14, 2022

1:31 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Roger Holland, Chair  
Senator Mike Shower, Vice Chair (via teleconference)  
Senator Shelley Hughes  
Senator Robert Myers  
Senator Jesse Kiehl

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Alaska Police Standards Council  
David Ross - Kenai

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

State Commission for Human Rights  
Lonzo Henderson - Anchorage  
Mae Marsh - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

SENATE BILL NO. 115

"An Act relating to confidentiality of information; relating to the duties of the Department of Administration; creating an address confidentiality program; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 161

"An Act relating to the definition of 'political party'; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 189

"An Act relating to sex trafficking; establishing the crime of patron of a victim of sex trafficking; relating to the crime of human trafficking; relating to sentencing for sex trafficking and patron of a victim of sex trafficking; establishing the process for a vacatur of judgment for a conviction of prostitution; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 115

SHORT TITLE: ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) KIEHL

03/31/21	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/31/21	(S)	STA, JUD, FIN
05/06/21	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
05/06/21	(S)	Heard & Held
05/06/21	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
02/17/22	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/17/22	(S)	Scheduled but Not Heard
03/01/22	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/01/22	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
03/03/22	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/03/22	(S)	Moved SB 115 Out of Committee
03/03/22	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/04/22	(S)	STA RPT 3DP 2NR
03/04/22	(S)	DP: SHOWER, COSTELLO, KAWASAKI
03/04/22	(S)	NR: REINBOLD, HOLLAND
03/14/22	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 161

SHORT TITLE: POLITICAL PARTY DEFINITION

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) WIELECHOWSKI

01/18/22	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/22	(S)	STA, JUD
02/17/22	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/17/22	(S)	Heard & Held
02/17/22	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/01/22	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/01/22	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
03/03/22	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/03/22	(S)	Moved SB 161 Out of Committee
03/03/22	(S)	MINUTE(STA)

03/04/22 (S) STA RPT 4NR 1DP  
03/04/22 (S) NR: SHOWER, COSTELLO, REINBOLD, HOLLAND  
03/04/22 (S) DP: KAWASAKI  
03/14/22 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MAE MARSH-PRAX Appointee  
State Commission for Human Rights  
Office of the Governor  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the State Commission for Human Rights.

DAVID ROSS, Appointee  
Alaska Police Standards Council  
Department of Public Safety (DPS)  
Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

LONZO HENDERSON, Appointee  
State Commission for Human Rights  
Office of the Governor  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the State Commission for Human Rights.

EDRIC CARRILLO, Staff  
Senator Jesse Kiehl  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented the changes in SB 115, from Version I to Version G on behalf of the sponsor.

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of SB 161.

DAVID DUNSMORE, Staff  
Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on behalf of the sponsor of SB 161.

MIKE COONS, representing self  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 161.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:31:51 PM](#)

**CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND** called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Myers, Hughes, Kiehl, and Chair Holland. Senator Shower joined (via teleconference) as the meeting was in progress.

### **CONFIRMATION HEARINGS** **Alaska Police Standards Council** **State Commission for Human Rights**

[1:32:34 PM](#)

**CHAIR HOLLAND** announced the consideration of Governor Appointees to Boards and Commissions.

**CHAIR HOLLAND** called on Mae Marsh-Prax, appointee to the State Commission for Human Rights.

[1:33:09 PM](#)

**MAE MARSH-PRAX** Appointee, State Commission for Human Rights, Office of the Governor, Fairbanks, Alaska, said she has lived in Alaska since 1990. She stated that her family is a blending of race, ethnicity, culture, and ability. As a young girl, she struggled to reconcile her church's message with her dad's racist attitude toward segregation. She watched civil rights unfold on television and in her community of Frederick, Maryland. She related that she found solace and solutions in the civil rights laws. She said her passion for justice eventually became her vocation.

**MS. MARSH-PRAX** said she is a retired federal civil servant. She summarized her 27-year work history. She stated that she served as a budget analyst, a program analyst, and director of the Equal Opportunity offices at Fort Richardson, Fort Wainwright, and Fort Greely. She later served in the Netherlands, working on conflict resolution within an international workforce. She further stated that she was the deputy director of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) under the Department of Defense. In Alaska, she worked as the director of Diversity and Equal

Opportunity at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, overseeing civil rights investigations and compliance.

[1:35:28 PM](#)

MS. MARSH-PRAX offered her view that she is a good fit for the State Commission on Human Rights because the commission's goal to eliminate and prevent discrimination matches her skill set. She stated that her knowledge as a practitioner had given her insight into civil rights laws and experience in applying them, including compliance. She had served as an advisor to top military and education officials and leaders. She highlighted that she is skilled in complaints processing, civil rights investigations, conflict management, facilitation, and mediation training. She indicated that she is committed to equality, opportunity, and due process. She characterized her approach as pragmatic; she honors the rule of law and would like to serve Alaska.

[1:36:58 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND said her EEO background appears to be an excellent fit for the Alaska Commission on Human Rights.

[1:37:08 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL stated that the State Commission for Human Rights has more missions than the state has funded. He asked if the state had achieved the right balance between education and complaints. He further asked what the commissioner's relationship is in setting that balance with staff.

MS. MARSH-PRAX said she had not yet worked inside the commission, so she was unsure how it operates. She offered to address it in the future.

[1:38:39 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES thanked her for sharing her background. She commented that Ms. Marsh-Prax was paid for the services she will now provide for the commission in a volunteer capacity. She asked why she chose this commission, and if she saw a problem or need that should be addressed.

MS. MARSH-PRAX said she believes there is a foundation in the law. She would like her grandchildren to benefit from the work of the commission. She viewed this as a way to use her knowledge and skills. She agreed that the position doesn't pay a salary, but she would be honored to serve.

SENATOR HUGHES said she appreciated that she viewed it as a generational investment for her grandchildren.

[1:41:25 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND turned to the next appointee, David Ross, Appointee to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

[1:41:45 PM](#)

DAVID ROSS, Appointee, Alaska Police Standards Council, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Kenai, Alaska, stated he has lived on the Kenai Peninsula for over 50 years. He said he seeks to serve as one of the four police chief positions on the council. He has been the police chief at the Kenai Police Department for the last six years. During his 21 years of police service, he has worked for the department as a police officer, investigator, sergeant, lieutenant, and police chief. He said he looks forward to serving on the council to ensure that the law enforcement workforce is professional and well trained in Alaska.

[1:43:08 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL pointed out that the Alaska Police Standards Council developed new training rules that were not adopted. He asked him to provide some additional thoughts about advancing police training, especially in rural areas.

MR. ROSS responded that while the council did not adopt the in-service training rules, the council may consider the regulations in smaller pieces over time. Thus, the council might still address the concept of providing in-service training for law enforcement. He noted he previously sent an email to members. Regarding mandating in-service training, the state might consider providing it in an online portal so every officer could receive the same training instead of every agency trying to develop training. He noted that most police departments have training standards, but it was also good to have in-service training standards since it is critical to law enforcement. He offered his view that the Kenai Police Department's training standards are high.

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SENATOR HUGHES noted that he made a mid-career change to law enforcement from road construction. She asked whether his earlier career would be beneficial as he deals with new law enforcement officers.

MR. ROSS suggested that having a career outside law enforcement was beneficial because it provides perspective and insight into other industries. He said his father worked in law enforcement in Kenai and retired prior to him joining the force. He stated that he had had an interest in law enforcement all along. He worked in a family road construction business for 15 years during his teenage years and 20s.

[1:46:39 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND commended him on his 21 years at the Kenai Police Department. He offered his belief that he was an excellent candidate to serve on the Alaska Police Standards Council.

[1:47:29 PM](#)

LONZO HENDERSON, Appointee, State Commission for Human Rights, Office of the Governor, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that he is a lifelong Alaskan and a Vietnam-era US Army veteran. He joined the Department of Corrections in the 1980s. He began his career as a probation and parole officer and retired as the deputy director for the Division of Probation and Parole. He served on the Board of Parole from 2008 to 2013 and as chair beginning in 2011.

MR. HENDERSON stated that he believes all Alaskans have a right to be treated fairly. He has observed how bias can distort and cause issues in the workplace. He further stated that he had many years of experience evaluating legal papers and making reasonable and just decisions in meetings and legal settings. Although the human rights cases with this commission are civil cases, he offered his view that his experience with the Department of Corrections and his education will prove to be an asset to the commission. He noted that he has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Psychology, a Minor in Sociology, and a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT).

[1:49:44 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked if the balance on the commission between outreach, education, taking complaints, and adjudication was the right balance. He further asked for his sense of board member interactions with staff on those issues.

MR. HENDERSON responded that he is new to the process, so he has not evaluated how that unfolds with the agency. He offered to respond to the committee once he had more information.

[1:50:39 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND noted that he had applied to serve on the Clemency Advisory Board and that the State Commission for Human Rights was his third choice. He asked whether he was comfortable being selected to serve on this commission.

MR. HENDERSON answered yes.

[1:51:42 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND opened public testimony; finding none, he closed public testimony on the confirmation hearings for governor appointees to boards and commissions.

[1:52:13 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

Alaska Police Standards Council  
David Ross - Kenai

State Commission for Human Rights  
Lonzo Henderson - Anchorage  
Mae Marsh-Prax- Fairbanks

Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[1:52:55 PM](#)

At ease

SENATOR SHOWER joined via teleconference.

**SB 115-ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM**

[1:55:51 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 115 "An Act relating to confidentiality of information; relating to the duties of the Department of Administration; creating an address confidentiality program; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR HOLLAND noted that this was the first hearing and recognized Senator Kiehl as the sponsor.

[1:56:12 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL, speaking as sponsor of SB 115, explained that the bill was prompted by two stories. A former legislator told a story about helping a domestic violence survivor who moved to Alaska. She went to get her mail from her US Post Office (USPO) box, and her abuser was waiting outside the USPO. He had somehow tracked down her address. Second, a friend who is a law enforcement officer fears for his family's safety. He stated that law enforcement officers must deal with people who behave in horrible ways, sometimes threatening revenge on them.

[1:58:01 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL paraphrased the sponsor statement.

SB 115 creates an address confidentiality program to protect survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, as well as for peace officers and correctional officers.

Forty-one states have some form of address confidentiality program. They are so widespread because there's real need—an address is essential to vote, drive, work, and so much more. But having an address in a public record makes a person vulnerable to an abuser or someone seeking to do harm. Alaskans who have survived relationship or sexual violence deserve a way to participate in society safely. So do Alaskans who work in law enforcement and face threats of retribution. An address confidentiality program minimizes the chances they will be found by someone who wishes them harm.

Under SB 115, the state would keep a Post Office Box and confidentially forward mail to public safety professionals and Alaskans under a protective order. These Alaskans deserve a chance to live safely.

[1:59:01 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL explained that in some states the function to forward mail and keep the victim or individual's home address confidential is housed in the lieutenant governor or Secretary of State's office. Often, voter registration addresses are the primary public record that might reveal a person's physical address. Other states house their programs within the Department of Law or District Attorney equivalents as part of victim-witness services. SB 115 proposes to put this program in the Department of Administration because Shared Services of Alaska

already operates a central mail system and has the infrastructure in place.

[1:59:26 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL reviewed the mechanics of the bill. In addition to adjusting a few rules for the Alaska Court System to ensure that these addresses do not inadvertently appear in a public court file, it would create the program and give the Department of Administration a significantly different scope of that program by regulation. The regulations indicate that most states only forward first-class, registered, and certified mail, so catalogs and magazines will not be forwarded. He highlighted that a voter requesting a mail ballot would have their ballot forwarded, but campaign mail would not be forwarded since it is third-class mail. He related that he has worked with the Department of Administration, law enforcement, Department of Corrections, and victims' advocates. He indicated that he had heard no opposition to the bill. He urged members to support SB 115 to provide an extra safety measure for survivors, law enforcement, and correctional officers.

CHAIR HOLLAND noted that there was a committee substitute (CS for the committee to consider.

[2:01:15 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS moved to adopt the committee substitute (CS) for SB 115, work order 32-LS0380\G, as the working document.

CHAIR HOLLAND objected for discussion purposes.

[2:01:52 PM](#)

EDRIC CARRILLO, Staff, Senator Jesse Kiehl, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, on behalf of the sponsor, stated that there were two technical changes from Version I to Version G. Section 6, subsection (h), establishes the penalty for disclosing confidential information of enrollees in the mail forwarding program as a class B misdemeanor. The original bill, Version I, inadvertently omitted a peace officer and a correctional officer from the list of eligible enrollees listed in subsection (c) (4) and (5), and Version G includes them, so the penalty provision would apply if someone disclosed their confidential information.

MR. CARRILLO related the last change in Section 9 would update the effective date to February 1, 2023, instead of 2022.

[2:02:56 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said she liked protecting survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. She commended the police officers and correctional officers who provide public safety in Alaska. She asked for the impact this bill would have. She wondered how many peace officers and correctional officers would be affected by the bill.

[2:03:45 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND removed his objection; he found no further objection and Version G was adopted. He asked Senator Kiehl to respond to the question.

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SENATOR KIEHL responded that the Department of Administration had difficulty estimating the figures. He indicated that he reviewed other states' programs. He noted that Vermont and Arizona did not include peace or correctional officers. He estimated that the registry would probably serve 700 to 900 Alaskans at full implementation. He noted that number is less than the total number of correctional or law enforcement officers in the state, in part, because these registries are not helpful for everyone. For example, law enforcement officers with a significant social media presence, such as a Facebook page or Instagram account showing photographs of their family taken in their front yard would not benefit. New officers who heed the advice of the Alaska State Trooper Training Academy to protect themselves and their families by avoiding using social media or other online locations may find the program helpful. A comparatively small number of those experiencing domestic violence feel so threatened that they must relocate and start their new lives elsewhere. Those survivors are the ones who will use this program and benefit from it.

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SENATOR HUGHES stated that victims are in situations through no fault of their own, so it makes sense for the state to help them. She offered her view that judges, school principals, teachers, or lawmakers may also want that protection. She wondered if people could keep their physical addresses private by using a USPO box.

SENATOR KIEHL agreed that most people would obtain sufficient privacy by getting a USPO box. He offered his view that very few lawmakers would feel the need to go to this level of privacy protection. He was not aware of other states that include law enforcement or correctional officers in this level of privacy. Individuals who seek revenge on law enforcement or correctional

officers or perpetrators who engage in stalking go beyond an angry afternoon of heckling. These people pose a danger. While the registry could be expanded, most people would not find it helpful since they are not subject to the threats that those who arrest criminals or keep them imprisoned face.

[2:09:12 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES wondered how mail from online stores, such as Amazon, would be handled for law enforcement officers who had concerns and elected to have their mail forwarded. She related some people with bad intentions could hack their mail.

SENATOR HUGHES surmised that the volume of mail the state might be paying to redeliver could be considerable if people solely relied on the state to forward their mail.

SENATOR KIEHL responded that most states forward mail pertaining to non-commercial transactions, such as property taxes, voting registration, any court documents, and certified mail. However, the government would not forward mail or packages from online stores or retailers, including Amazon. He emphasized that this relates to public records, so it would be a separate issue if an abuser or criminal were to hack commercial websites or accomplish major data breaches. He explained that the stalkers that this bill addresses are domestic violence abusers, and most of them don't have high-level hacking skills to pose threats.

[2:11:46 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES pointed out that other professions, including prosecutors and tax auditors could suffer from retribution. They may wish to get USPO boxes.

[2:12:05 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND noted that Senator Shower had joined the meeting via teleconference.

SENATOR SHOWER confirmed that he was participating via teleconference.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked whether the regulations would identify the type of mail to be forwarded.

[2:12:44 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL answered yes.

[2:12:47 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked if state employees would deliver the mail.

SENATOR KIEHL answered that state employees would bundle the forwarded mail in a single envelope or package and remail it to the participants' address.

[2:13:38 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS referred to the public records, noting that under the Real ID Act of 2005, citizens are required to obtain a Real ID and, to do so, must provide proof of address. He asked whether this bill would be Real ID compliant.

[2:14:12 PM](#)

MR. CARRILLO responded that the state and municipalities would be required to accept the USPO box.

SENATOR MYERS asked whether the federal government would accept the USPO box to meet the Real ID requirements.

SENATOR KIEHL noted that the division did not raise that issue. However, he offered to research this through the Division of Motor Vehicles and respond to the committee.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked him to repeat the question.

[2:14:59 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked whether the federal government would accept the USPO box as proof of residence.

[2:15:34 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS noticed the bill makes it a crime to disclose someone's physical address. AS 44.21.022(h)(2) reads, "is not authorized to access the address confidentiality program database and knowingly discloses the information to the respondent of a protective order." He asked why the bill doesn't make it a crime to access the database when the person is not authorized to access it.

SENATOR KIEHL responded that the difference was related to the mental state for the disclosure. He explained that someone at the department giving the information to someone who is not allowed to have it would be guilty of a more serious crime than someone who happens upon the information but knows the person is protected yet still allows the information to be released. The bill treats the release of information in different levels of severity.

[2:17:15 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked Senator Shower if he had any questions.

[2:17:26 PM](#)

SENATOR SHOWER answered that he had no questions. He related that he previously heard the bill in the Senate State Affairs committee and it made sense to him.

SENATOR KIEHL thanked the committee for hearing the bill.

CHAIR HOLLAND held SB 115 in committee.

[2:18:09 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND brought SB 115 back before the committee.

[2:18:20 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND opened public testimony on SB 115; hearing none, he closed public testimony.

[2:18:41 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND held SB 115 in committee.

#### **SB 161-POLITICAL PARTY DEFINITION**

[2:18:45 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 161 "An Act relating to the definition of 'political party'; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR HOLLAND asked Senator Wielechowski to introduce the bill.

[2:19:09 PM](#)

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 161, stated that this issue was brought to him by a constituent active in the Libertarian Party. He paraphrased the sponsor statement.

Senate Bill 161 simplifies the process for political parties gaining official recognition by recognizing any party with at least 5,000 registered voters. This bill would replace the current variable threshold with a standard that is simple and consistent.

Currently, political parties gain or maintain official recognition by having registered voters equal to at least 3% of the total votes cast for governor, U.S. Senate, or U.S. House of Representatives in the last election depending on which office was on the ballot

that year. This threshold can vary wildly from election to election and after the 2020 election it increased by 27% because of record voter turnout.

With the passage of Ballot Measure 2, official party status will no longer be used to determine ballot access for candidates for governor and lieutenant governor, U.S. Congress, or Alaska State Legislature. The only offices for which officially recognized parties will have automatic ballot access are U.S. president and vice president. Parties with much fewer than 5,000 registered voters routinely secure ballot access by petition and SB 161 will save the Division of Elections the time and expense of reviewing petitions for parties that have already demonstrated a significant amount of support.

Officially recognized parties have the right to purchase two pages in the Official Election Pamphlet, to nominate poll workers and election board members, and to have observers present at polling places and counting centers. In addition, there are different campaign finance limits and reporting requirements for recognized parties and unrecognized parties. SB 161 ensures that this status is determined by a simple, consistent, and easy to understand threshold.

[2:19:46 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI referred to a chart in members' packets [titled, Registered Voters Needed for Political Parties to be Officially Recognized, 2010 - 2020], stating that the number was roughly 11,000 people. He noted that the figure had fluctuated depending on the number of people that voted at each election. For example, in 2010, the figure was under 8,000, it increased to nearly 10,000 in 2016, but since then it went back down.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that this bill sets a clear amount of 5,000, which was selected by the number of Libertarian Party registered voters. The Alaska Supreme Court previously reviewed this in *Vogler v. Miller*, a 1983 case. The court ruled that the state threshold of 10 percent was too high and unconstitutional. He noted that most states had thresholds in the 2-5 percent range. He noted that he solicited comments from the Alaskan Independence Party, the Green Party, and the Constitution Party, and the Green Party supported lowering the threshold. He indicated that he was unaware of any opposition to the bill.

[2:21:38 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS stated that the legislature had not updated this statute in 40 years, but the state's population has increased since then by 40 percent. He asked whether the bill should be static or if it should tie to the census population figures.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI answered that he was neutral. He offered his view that the bill should use some specific, substantial figure. He stated his preference to use a firm figure, so parties will know what number they need to reach. He indicated that he would not object if the committee decided it was wiser to add a population adjuster. He reiterated that 5,000 seemed to be a reasonable figure since Alaska does not have big spikes in population.

[2:23:14 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES offered one approach, that if 3 percent was roughly 10,000, the figure could be set at 1.5 percent so it would flow with the population.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI answered that he had no issue with 1.5 percent, but he would like to hear the public testimony.

[2:23:58 PM](#)

DAVID DUNSMORE, Staff, Senator Bill Wielechowski, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, on behalf of the sponsor of SB 161, explained that one advantage of having a numerical threshold rather than a formula was that a formula would fluctuate since it was tied to the voter turnout in the previous election. He stated that presidential elections universally have a higher voter turnout than midterm elections. He referred to the chart, noting that the last election had a dramatic bump. However, somewhat paradoxically, the threshold to become a qualified party in a midterm election is actually higher than that in a presidential election.

[2:25:13 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND said he understood the preference for a firm figure.

[2:25:40 PM](#)

SENATOR SHOWER stated that 5,000 was fine. He asked if the sponsor would reach out to other parties for comments.

[2:26:24 PM](#)

MR. DUNSMORE pointed out that after the bill moved from the Senate State Affairs Committee, the Alaska Constitution Party contacted him with support to lower the threshold.

[2:26:48 PM](#)

At ease

[2:27:05 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting.

[2:27:15 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS noticed that the sponsor statement indicated that this was being discussed due to ballot access changes and the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC) rules. He asked for examples of differences in APOC reporting requirements for political parties.

MR. DUNSMORE offered to research and report to the committee with more details. He highlighted that the two major differences are that political parties can create subdivisions within the party that are treated under the same limit. However, an individual group would need to form a completely separate group. For example, the Democratic and Republican Parties have separate House and Senate campaign accounts. Second, there is a different contribution limit for individuals giving to parties and parties contributing to candidates.

[2:28:40 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND opened public testimony on SB 161.

[2:29:06 PM](#)

MIKE COONS, representing self, Palmer, Alaska, thanked Senator Wielechowski for bringing up the bill. He related that it reminded him that the Green Party and the Alaska Constitution Party believe there will be parties in 2023 if ranked-choice voting is repealed. He offered his view that the parties all believe in party affiliation and primaries to go along with them. He spoke in support of SB 161. He agreed that 5,000 was a good figure, especially since the smaller parties are requesting that threshold.

[2:30:44 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND found no further testimony and closed public testimony on SB 161.

[2:31:14 PM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND held SB 161 in committee.

2:31:52 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 2:31 p.m.