

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 11, 2023

1:57 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Sarah Vance, Chair  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Representative Craig Johnson  
Representative David Eastman  
Representative Andrew Gray  
Representative Cliff Groh

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Jamie Allard, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 4  
"An Act relating to elections."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 4

SHORT TITLE: ELECTIONS: REPEAL RANKED CHOICE VOTING

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) VANCE

01/19/23	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23
01/19/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/23	(H)	STA, JUD
05/02/23	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
05/02/23	(H)	Heard & Held
05/02/23	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
05/09/23	(H)	STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
05/09/23	(H)	Moved HB 4 Out of Committee
05/09/23	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
05/10/23	(H)	STA RPT 4DP 1DNP
05/10/23	(H)	DP: ALLARD, CARPENTER, WRIGHT, SHAW
05/10/23	(H)	DNP: STORY
05/10/23	(H)	FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER JUD
05/10/23	(H)	BILL REPRINTED
05/10/23	(H)	JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
05/10/23	(H)	Heard & Held

05/10/23 (H) MINUTE (JUD)  
05/11/23 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

**WITNESS REGISTER**

JOHN SONIN, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

JULI LUCKY, Executive Director  
Alaskans for Better Elections  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

DELAYNA WEST, representing self  
Homer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

MIKE JONES, representing self  
Homer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

BRENDA EDENS, representing self  
Homer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

EILEEN BECKER, representing self  
Homer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

PAM BRODIE, representing self  
Homer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

DONNA STEINFORT, representing self  
Eagle River, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

MICAH FRY, representing self  
Palmer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

DIANA CARBONELL, representing self  
Homer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

SUE BURNSTIN, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

PATRICK CAMPAIGN, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

LIZ VASQUEZ, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

SANTA CLAUS, representing self

North Pole, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

JAMES BRADY, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

CATHERINE SCHULTZ, representing self

Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

ERIC ZUBER, representing self

Sterling, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

CYTHIA WARBELOW-TACK, representing self

Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

KASEY ADERHOLD, representing self

Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

MARY WALKER, representing self

Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

SALLY RUE, representing self

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

JANICE BANTA

representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

COLLEEN BRIDGE, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

HEATHER GOCTSHALL, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

JONATHAN CARROL, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

DEBRA NANCE, representing self  
Ketchikan, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

ERIK HENDERSON, representing self  
Soldotna, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

ART WARBELOW, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

ALEX KOPLIN, representing self  
Homer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

EARL WILLIAMS JR., representing self  
Homer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

SANDRA MIEROP, representing self  
Homer, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

ERIN MCKITTRICK, representing self  
Seldovia, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

DEBBIE MCKAY, representing self  
Kenai, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

ALLEN STRAH, representing self  
Eagle River, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

BERT HOUGHTALING, representing self  
Big Lake, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

TERESA WROBEL, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

IRENE BORTNICK, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

PETER MCKAY, representing self  
Nikiski, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

JEANNIE KIRKLAND, representing self  
Valdez, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

RICARDA LEDMAN, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

DEBRA RUDIS, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

CHARLIE STEWART, representing self  
Halibut Cover, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

CHERYL KAJDAN, representing self  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support if HB 4.

JERRY FOGG, representing self  
Seward, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:57:32 PM](#)

**CHAIR SARAH VANCE** called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:57 p.m. Representatives Carpenter, C. Johnson, Eastman, Gray, Groh, and Vance were present at the call to order.

**HB 4-ELECTIONS: REPEAL RANKED CHOICE VOTING**

[1:58:02 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 4, "An Act relating to elections."

[1:58:30 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE opened public testimony on HB 4.

[1:59:20 PM](#)

JOHN SONIN, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He opined that the partisanship provoked by the bill was destroying e pluribus unum; further, that the belief that "my way is the only way" was harmful. He stressed his opposition to HB 4, claiming that it was intended to galvanize "the zealotry in one mind."

[2:01:15 PM](#)

JULI LUCKY, Executive Director, Alaskans for Better Elections, testified in opposition to HB 4. She conveyed that the current election system prioritized voter values, including voter power, choice, competition, and accountability. She highlighted the reduction of the spoiler effect and reiterated her opposition to HB 4.

[2:02:39 PM](#)

DELAYNA WEST, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She shared her belief that [Alaskans] were not fully informed of what Ballot Measure 2 [Top-Four Ranked-Choice Voting and Campaign Finance Laws Initiative (2020)] entailed, adding that voters were "tricked, lied to, and cheated." She requested that the legislature repeal ranked choice voting (RCV).

[2:03:32 PM](#)

MIKE JONES, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. He argued that Ballot Measure 2 contained two distinct and

unrelated issues: RCV and dark money. He said it was easy to see how someone could have voted for the proposition out of concern for dark money without realizing the unintended consequences of RCV. He believed that the implementation of RCV had created doubts in the honesty and transparency of the election process and urged the legislature to eliminate RCV and restore trust in elections.

[2:04:45 PM](#)

BRENDA EDENS, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She opined that RCV was not the will of the majority of Alaskans. She recounted her experience attending public meetings that educated people on RCV. She shared her belief that RCV added significant confusion and multiplied suspicion in people's mind. She added that voting for one person seemed to be simple and fair.

[2:05:39 PM](#)

EILEEN BECKER, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She recounted her experience working for the petition drive, adding that she observed confusion, avoidance, and a "ridiculous" outcome. She shared her belief that the bill would bring back the true intent of voting.

[2:06:54 PM](#)

PAM BRODIE, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She shared her experience as an election worker in 2020, acknowledging that there were more spoiled ballots than ever; however, there was no problem correcting them. She stated that RCV was passed by voters and should only be repealed by a vote of the people.

[2:08:44 PM](#)

DONNA STEINFORT, representing self, Testified in opposition to HB 4. She found that as a long-time election official, once people understood the RCV system, they generally liked it. She said RCV forced candidates to speak to the issues and their action plan rather than sending out misleading and false statements about their opponents. Further, RCV reduced the "stranglehold" of political parties on the election process, she said, and urged a "no" vote on HB 4.

[2:10:29 PM](#)

MICAH FRY, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He challenged the "one vote on person" defenders, pointing out that the "one vote one person" system was used to establish RCV. He advised making the repeal of RCV a ballot measure, suggesting that Alaskans would reject it outright.

[2:12:06 PM](#)

DIANA CARBONELL, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She shared her experience as a poll worker and stated her belief that no one was disenfranchised by RCV. She expressed her irritation by the bill sponsor's assertion that HB 4 was the will of the people.

[2:13:01 PM](#)

SUE BURNSTIN, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She shared her belief that the "nay sayers" were unhappy with the outcome of the election, which was no excuse for opposing open, free-choice voting, she said.

[2:14:15 PM](#)

PATRICK CAMPAIGN, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4 and stated his belief that the bill sought to retract the will of the people. He reported that RCV saved "multiple thousands of dollars" in public funds for runoff elections and repeated voting experiences, which disillusioned much of the population. He stated that RCV made people feel that their vote mattered while helping the candidates themselves.

[2:15:32 PM](#)

LIZ VASQUEZ, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She expressed her belief that RCV was not the will of the people because it was advertised as the elimination of dark money. Additionally, she highlighted the outside money that was used to support the initiative.

[2:16:54 PM](#)

SANTA CLAUS, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. Prior to RCV, he said, the republican and democratic parties monopolized elections and controlled the primaries. He pointed out that there were no runoff election expenses with RCV, adding that it reduced partisanship, encouraged more candidates to run,

improved voter turnout, and took power away from special interests.

[2:18:16 PM](#)

JAMES BRADY, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He shared his belief that RCV was working in Alaska and nationally. He said it moved Alaska away from polarizing politics, which resulted in gridlock and allowed politicians to more effectively work across party lines. He asserted that RCV better represents the will of voters and gave him a voice in the outcome of elections. He shared his experience as a poll worker.

[2:20:24 PM](#)

CATHERINE SCHULTZ, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She said history showed that the will of the people was sometimes "inappropriate," adding that [RCV] was one such example. She shared her belief that the legislature was responsible for making good choices on behalf of the people and encouraged support for the bill.

[2:21:27 PM](#)

ERIC ZUBER, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4, which he characterized as a "power play" by politicians to revoke the will of the people. RCV allowed people to vote for who they want, he said, rather than voting against someone they don't want.

[2:22:42 PM](#)

CYTHIA WARBELOW-TACK, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4, noting that 68 percent of the verbal testimony given so far had been against the bill. She conveyed that a majority of Alaskans voted RCV into law, adding that a vote for the bill would be a "blatant violation" of the trust given to legislators to carry out the voters' will. She said RCV allowed her to vote for who she wants and found the argument that Alaskans were incapable of understanding RCV to be disrespectful.

KASEY ADERHOLD, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She said RCV was adopted after being approved by a majority of Alaskan voters in 2020. Adopting RCV gave voters more voice and allowed them to confidentially vote for their top choice candidate. She cautioned representatives not to override the

voice of Alaskans who voted to adopt RCV, the same system that resulted in the fair election of each member of the committee.

[2:25:29 PM](#)

MARY WALKER, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. With so many pressing matters to attend to, she said she didn't understand why the House was spending time and effort to repeal a measure that the majority of Alaskans voted for.

[2:26:07 PM](#)

SALLY RUE, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She shared her belief that the implementation of RCV was successful and challenged the idea that there was rampant confusion amongst voters. She said RCV provided the opportunity to elect leaders that were representative and who could work together for the good of the majority. She urged the legislature to respect the will of voters and to see how RCV worked through several election cycles before making radical changes.

[2:27:30 PM](#)

JANICE BANTA, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She said she voted in favor of RCV because it ensures that candidates were elected with a true majority of voters. She added that RCV was a fair process that promoted outcomes that appeal more broadly to the general public. She urged the legislature to withdraw the bill and focus on more pressing needs, such as education and outmigration.

[2:28:25 PM](#)

COLLEEN BRIDGE, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. As an unaffiliated voter, she shared her irritation with the closed primary system, which prevented her from voting for the best candidate, she said, regardless of political party.

[2:30:01 PM](#)

HEATHER GOCTSHALL, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She stated that RCV disenfranchised voters, especially historically marginalized groups in Alaska. Further, she asserted that the RCV algorithm could not be audited and required an elongated period for results. She opined that RCV and open primaries did not represent the will of the people.

[2:31:24 PM](#)

JONATHAN CARROL, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. As a registered republican, he said he observed how the prior voting system affected the people he loved and caused them to go into a "ditch." Alternatively, RCV encouraged people to "go towards loving people" and brought the best out of candidates. He requested that the committee oppose the bill.

[2:32:36 PM](#)

DEBRA NANCE, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She shared her belief that Ballot Measure 2 was deceptive and caused many people to vote incorrectly; further, that RCV was confusing, underhanded, and wrong. She added that the more she learned about RCV, the more she opposed it.

[2:33:36 PM](#)

ERIK HENDERSON, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He stated that RCV allowed him to vote for his preferred candidate without compromising, adding that [RCV] should only be repealed by a vote of the people.

[2:34:24 PM](#)

ART WARBELOW, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He said the RCV initiative was passed by a majority of Alaskans and should not be overruled by the legislature. He challenged the notion that people didn't understand what they were voting for [in Ballot Measure 2] by pointing out that he hadn't heard any testifiers that voted for RCV who were in agreement. He urged [the legislature] to cripple the power of parties who were willing to overrule the voice Alaskans.

[2:35:38 PM](#)

ALEX KOPLIN, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He expressed his support for RCV and open primaries, adding that more choices and more opportunities created a better form of government. He added that the repeal of RCV should be done through a ballot initiative.

[2:36:51 PM](#)

EARL WILLIAMS JR., representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4 and in favor of RCV.

[2:37:17 PM](#)

SANDRA MIEROP, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She conveyed that at first, she was skeptical of RCV; however, after learning about it, she could not think of any negative aspects. She said RCV focuses on the candidate, not the political party; further, it eliminates runoff elections and saves both taxpayers and voters money.

[2:38:30 PM](#)

ERIN MCKITTRICK, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She pointed out that many of the arguments centered around the bill focused on Alaskans being stupid or confused. She shared her belief that Alaskans were smart, independent minded people, and mostly unaffiliated with any political party, who knew what they were voting for when they passed the RCV initiative. Further, she argued that Alaskans knew who they were voting for when they used the RCV system to elect candidates across the political spectrum and knew what [the legislature] was trying to do by overturning the will of the people.

[2:39:17 PM](#)

DEBBIE MCKAY, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She stated her belief that RCV worked well in the last election and that the Division of Elections (DOE) did a good job explaining how the new system works. She expressed her support for open primaries and urged the legislature to respect the voters' will.

[2:40:08 PM](#)

ALLEN STRAH, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He opined that repealing RCV would do nothing but undermine the will of the voters and erode confidence in the legislature. He shared his belief that "sore losers" of the last election would "beat a drum" to try to repeal RCV. He said RCV was the fairest method and urged the legislature to reject HB 4.

[2:41:10 PM](#)

BERT HOUGHTALING, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. He shared his belief that Ballot Measure 2 should have been a one-subject ballot measure. He expressed frustration with the judicial branch and the outcome of the last election. He urged the legislature to repeal RCV and bring Alaska back to an accountable electoral method.

[2:42:26 PM](#)

TERESA WROBEL, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She said RCV was approved by a majority of Alaskans, and shared her belief that it was wrong to pursue a legislative change to a voter approved initiative so quickly. Additionally, she spoke in support of open primaries. She urged the legislature to reject the bill.

[2:43:39 PM](#)

IRENE BORTNICK, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She asserted that RCV and open primaries were popular in Alaska, adding that other states looking to adopt these policies were using Alaska as a guide. She reported that RCV worked particularly well in Alaska because a large portion of the electorate identified as independent. She concluded by emphasizing the Alaskans voted in favor of RCV.

[2:44:26 PM](#)

PETER MCKAY, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He said RCV restored his faith in elections and gave the power of choice back to the people. He said HB 4 would undo the choice of the people and should not be considered.

[2:45:13 PM](#)

JEANNIE KIRKLAND, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She expressed her frustration with the last election, stating that RCV was not a representation of the people.

[2:45:51 PM](#)

RICARDA LEDMAN, representing self, Testified in opposition to HB 4. She said RCV allowed her to look beyond party affiliation and find candidates that exemplified her values. She reported that Canada had been using RCV successfully for years, adding that both democrats and republicans could gather around RCV.

[2:47:04 PM](#)

DEBRA RUDIS, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She shared her belief that the explanations of RCV were clear and well presented. She requested that the legislature respect the will of Alaskan voters.

[2:47:46 PM](#)

CHARLIE STEWART, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He shared his belief that it was in poor taste to repeal the will of voters so quickly, especially when the legislature had not accomplished a balanced budget or increased revenues to fund education.

[2:48:27 PM](#)

CHERYL KAJDAN, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She opined that the will of the people was subverted in the election of [RCV]. She asserted that RCV suppressed voters and disenfranchised the elderly.

[2:49:51 PM](#)

JERRY FOGG, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. He spoke in favor of "one person one vote" and urged the legislature to repeal RCV.

[2:50:37 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 4.

CHAIR VANCE announced that HB 4 was held over.

[2:51:08 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:51 p.m.