

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 2, 2023

3:07 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Laddie Shaw, Chair  
Representative Stanley Wright, Vice Chair  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Representative Craig Johnson  
Representative Jamie Allard  
Representative Jennie Armstrong  
Representative Andi Story

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Representative CJ McCormick

**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

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE SARAH VANCE  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 4, as the prime sponsor.

JAKE ALMEIDA, Staff  
Representative Sarah Vance  
Alaska State Legislature

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 4, on behalf of Representative Vance, prime sponsor.

JULI LUCKY, Executive Director  
Alaskans for Better Elections  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in opposition to HB 4.

NICK MURRAY, Director of Policy  
Maine Policy Institute  
Portland, Maine

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in support of HB 4.

KRISTY KISSINGER-TOTTEN, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

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

CRYSTAL JOHNSTON, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

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

CLAUDIA CRISS, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

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

JAMES CRISS, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

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

GEORGE WOODS, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

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

JAN CAROLYN HARDY, State President  
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees  
Anchorage, Alaska

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

BILL WISE, representing self  
Valdez, Alaska

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

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

HARI DEV SINGH KHALSA, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

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

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

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

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

JOE NELSON, Chairman  
Sealaska Corporation  
Juneau, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 4.

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

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

MICKEY BARKER, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 4.

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

DAVID KASSER, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska, Alaska

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

ODETTE EDGAR, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

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

LAURA STATS, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

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

PATTY ITCHOAK, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

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

ZACHARY MACINTYRE, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

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

MARK DESINGER, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

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

JEFFREY BARNHART, representing self  
Soldotna, Alaska

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

JANET MORRISON, representing self  
Soldotna, Alaska

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

JAMES HARPRING, representing self  
Funny River, Alaska

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

CATHERINE MCCARTHY, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

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

JUNE ROTHMAN, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

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

COLLEEN FORD, representing self  
Kodiak, Alaska

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

MIKE MILLIGAN, representing self

Kodiak, Alaska

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

JANET JAHNSAN, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

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

ERIC JORDAN, representing self

Sitka, Alaska

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

LWIN MCCABE, representing self

Juneau, Alaska

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

KELLY FISHLER, representing self

Juneau, Alaska

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

GRIFFIN PLUSH, representing self

Juneau, Alaska

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

DEBBIE GOZDOR, representing self

Eagle River, Alaska

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

ROBERT HOCKEMA, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

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

DONNA STEINFORT, representing self

Eagle River, Alaska

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

MARK SPRINGER, representing self

Bethel, Alaska

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

MIKE GRUNST, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

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

LIBBY DALTON, representing self

Fairbanks, Alaska

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

BRONSON FRYE, President  
Building and Construction Trade Council of Southcentral Alaska  
Anchorage, Alaska

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

BARBARA TYNDALL, representing self  
North Pole, Alaska

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

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:07:57 PM](#)

**CHAIR LADDIE SHAW** called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:07 p.m. Representatives Carpenter, Armstrong, Story, Wright, and Shaw were present at the call to order. Representatives C. Johnson and Allard arrived as the meeting was in progress.

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

[Contains discussion of HB 1]

[3:08:28 PM](#)

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

[3:09:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SARAH VANCE, Alaska State Legislature, introduced HB 4, as the prime sponsor. She asserted that the number one issue that has been raised by Alaskans is to repeal ranked choice voting (RCV). She argued that this issue has risen above the conversations concerning the base student allocation (BSA) and the permanent fund dividend (PFD). She proceeded to paraphrase the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 4 repeals rank choice voting and open primaries, returning the election process to the way Alaskans voted prior to Ballot Measure 2 of 2020 except for areas in statute the courts have found unconstitutional. This bill attempts to remedy the constitutional issues by providing for combined open primaries and omitting the requirement that party nominees be registered as a member of that party.

The ballot measure that transformed Alaska's election system in 2020 passed by a narrow margin of less than 1 percent. The campaign led Alaskans to believe the ballot measure would do away with "dark money" only and that it would give them "more options" in voting. Most Alaskan's did not know that it would upend our way of voting that has always been one person equals one vote. Many voters have expressed buyer's remorse since passage. In fact, recent polling shows that that majority of Alaskans strongly agree to repeal rank choice voting.

This bill allows combined open primaries when two parties request jointly, and implements court decisions in State v. Democratic Party, from 2018 holding that requirement that candidates register with a party when seeking party nomination violates parties' free speech associational rights and State v. Green Party of Alaska in 2005 holding that prohibition on parties combining primary ballots under the system established in AS 15.25.010, 15.25.014, and 15.25.060 is unconstitutional.

House Bill 4 seeks to implement the will of Alaskans by returning us to the historical and trusted election process where one person equals one vote.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE reported that 1 in 8 rural Alaskans' ballots were rejected in the special congressional primary of 2022, with up to 17 percent being rejected because of a lack of signature or identifier. She expressed the opinion that RCV has added more complications to an already disenfranchised voting population. She referenced studies that show jurisdictions with higher proportions of older voters were more likely to report ballot marking mistakes, increasing the potential for a rejected ballot. Furthermore, Fair Vote, a proponent of RCV, found that the prevalence of ranking three candidates has been lowest among African Americans, Latinos, voters with less education, and those whose first language is not English. She purported that RCV has failed to increase voter turnout or provide more options to voters as promised. Instead, it has increased voter confusion and disenfranchisement, and this has caused the lowest voter turnout in decades. She urged the legislature to return to the trusted process of "one person equals one vote." She concluded by sharing a quote from a report, titled "A False

Majority," by the Maine Heritage Policy Center [included in the committee packet].

[3:17:10 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG questioned the difference between HB 4 and HB 1.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE responded that there is one small difference on page 33 of the bill. She deferred to her staff for an explanation.

[3:17:29 PM](#)

JAKE ALMEIDA, Staff, Representative Sarah Vance, on behalf of Representative Vance, prime sponsor of HB 4, referenced the repealer section of the bill, Section 62. He indicated that AS 15.13.070(g) would be enacted with HB 4, whereas the statute was excluded from HB 1.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG asked whether HB 1 was being "pulled" by the bill sponsor. She pointed out that HB 1 has been heard in committee, and many of the same talking points have been shared. She asked why two identical bills were being heard by the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE responded that both bills were pre-filed, and she added that she and Representative George Rauscher, [prime sponsor of HB 1], decided to "see which one rose to the top." She explained that the repealer included in HB 4 and excluded from HB 1 concerns campaign contributions for joint governor and lieutenant governor races.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG opined that the chair has decided to hear HB 4, as opposed to amending HB 1.

[3:19:32 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW opened invited testimony.

[3:20:00 PM](#)

JULI LUCKY, Executive Director, Alaskans for Better Elections, gave invited testimony in opposition to HB 4. She said the core principles of RCV empower voters to choose their representatives, remove barriers for candidates to run for office, and require candidates to have majority support to win.

She asserted that, in addition to representing their values, voters want legislators who work together to solve the problems, regardless of party affiliation. She expressed the opinion that voters want competition for their vote and the freedom to support their favorite candidate without splitting the vote and contributing to their least favorite candidate. Further, voters want to empower legislators to work on their behalf and make tough decisions in the best interest of communities. She said that the current election system [RCV] prioritizes these values: voter choice, competition, and accountability. She continued that a nonpartisan primary reduces barriers to entry and allows a more diverse candidate pool to run, as it puts all candidates and voters on an even playing field. She asserted that competition has been increased by having the top four vote getters, regardless of party affiliation, advance to the general election. She noted that, while competition is good for democracy, having more candidates to choose from could lead to a "spoiler effect." She purported that the three come-from-behind races in Alaska's November election demonstrated how the RCV system allowed for more competition while removing the spoiler effect. She added that requiring candidates to earn broad support directly from their constituents increases accountability and rewards legislators who put their constituents first. She stated that Alaskans for Better Elections supports reinstating reasonable campaign contribution limits and opposes the repeal of AS 15.13.070(g) in Section 62 of the proposed bill. For these reasons, she stated her opposition to the proposed legislation.

[3:23:19 PM](#)

NICK MURRAY, Director of Policy, Maine Policy Institute, gave invited testimony in support of HB 4. He reported that Maine Policy Institute has studied RCV since it was passed in 2016 and has advised policy groups across the nation. He opined that repealing RCV would save Alaskans an "immense headache" over time. He stated that election data and academic analysis shows that more voters were disenfranchised under RCV in comparison to simple plurality voting. He stated that opposition to RCV across the nation and across the political spectrum is primarily due to exhausted or discarded ballots. He cited a report submitted by Nolan McCarty, a professor of politics and public affairs at Princeton University, which included data from 98 RCV races. He reported that 11 percent of ballots were discarded on average in RCV elections, and this has decreased voter confidence in the election system. The report has found that a higher rate of exhausted ballots correlates to electorates with

more senior citizen populations and non-college educated voters; additionally, 60 percent of the RCV races had less than 50 percent of the votes cast for that office. He cited academic research out of San Francisco that found minority, elderly, and less educated voters to be disenfranchised by the RCV system; further, it has increased disparities in election turnout. He stated that the research suggests the higher complexity of RCV presents barriers to participants, which decreases turnout and raises the probability of errors. In closing, he argued that RCV has resulted in more exhausted ballots and, therefore, less participation due to the complexity of the system.

[3:29:42 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW opened public testimony on HB 4.

[3:30:43 PM](#)

KRISTY KISSINGER-TOTTEN, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4 and expressed her support for RCV and open primaries. She said RCV gives voice to the people and helps elect leaders who have the strongest support; furthermore, RCV allows multiple candidates from one party to run. She expressed the opinion that RCV helps restrict undue influence from powerful party politics and puts candidates on an equal platform, while removing the fear of a third candidate splitting the vote. She opined that HB 4 would be an attempt to subvert the will of the people, and she emphasized that RCV must remain.

[3:32:45 PM](#)

CRYSTAL JOHNSTON, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She likened RCV to buying candy from a store, indicating that more options, like candidates, is better. She reiterated her support for RCV.

[3:33:51 PM](#)

CLAUDIA CRISS, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She opined that the 2022 [midterm] election outcome would have been different had RCV not been instated. She expressed opposition to closed primaries, as this allows committees of people to select candidates based on political affiliation.

[3:34:42 PM](#)

JAMES CRISS, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4, expressing support for RCV. He reported that Alaska has the highest percentage of unaffiliated and nonpartisan voters of any state, with 57.7 percent of registered voters identifying as such. He stated that RCV gives the majority of Alaskan voters a choice in who represents them. He opined that RCV is straight forward, easy to understand, and offers a meaningful way to participate in government.

[3:36:09 PM](#)

GEORGE WOODS, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He opined that RCV represents the will of the people, adding that its use would become more accepted as it grows more familiar. He suggested that the repeal effort is motivated by candidates who would blame the voting system rather than their own lack of appeal. He shared his belief that it is laudable that Alaska was leading the way in this "experiment in Democracy."

[3:37:23 PM](#)

JAN CAROLYN HARDY, State President, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, testified in opposition to HB 4. She read the following prepared remarks:

In 2020 Citizens of the State of Alaska voted on a Citizens' Initiative to change our system of election from party-based ballots to Rank Choice Voting (RCV.) The Alaska Legislature is convened to represent the Will of the People and to enact legislation to benefit all Alaskans.

HB 4 seeks to recant the Will of the People in favor of the discontents in and out of power. HB 4 has been introduced to appease the discontents who did not win the most recent State and Federal elections and those who are fearful that RCV will lift the thumb on 'fair and free' elections. Those who support HB 4 and other similar legislation designed to curtail Democracy would do better to earn their keep by presenting policies created to benefit the People of Alaska and not by building an insulating fortress around themselves.

HB 4 is a bad bill. It is an undemocratic bill. How dare the authors of this inflammatory legislation elevate themselves above the Will of the People!

[3:39:11 PM](#)

BILL WISE, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. He highlighted the public's distrust in the electoral process and urged support for HB 4 to renew integrity in the system and remove "opaqueness."

[3:41:25 PM](#)

MUKHYA KHALSA, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She expressed support for RCV, adding that this has been the first time she has felt her vote truly counted. She explained that RCV has allowed her to vote for the candidate she wanted to win.

[3:43:06 PM](#)

HARI DEV SINGH KHALSA, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4, characterizing the bill as voter suppression. He pointed out that a majority of Alaskans have already voted for RCV.

[3:44:38 PM](#)

ROBERT WELTON, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He pointed out that a majority of Alaskans voted for RCV and open primaries in the 2020 election; furthermore, he opined that Make American Great Again (MAGA) extremists are attempting to repeal it with the proposed legislation, which he described as a "bad" bill. He expressed the belief that RCV is working, and he gave the example of moderates who could "reach across the aisle" in the elections for U.S. Representative Mary Peltola and U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski. Furthermore, he opined that RCV makes the state legislature a more functional body, citing Senator Cathy Giessel's reelection. He emphasized that repealing RCV behind the "closed doors" of the legislature would be the wrong way to fix the problem.

[3:46:55 PM](#)

EMILY KANE, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4, adding that she has found great value in RCV. She pointed out that Alaskans voted to engage in open primaries and RCV in 2020

[Ballot Measure 2 - Top-Four Ranked Choice Voting and Campaign Finance Laws Initiative (2020)]. She argued that RCV was created by the popular vote to make campaigning more civil and to elect leaders who are more representative of the population. She pointed out that the overwhelming majority of those in favor of RCV include the independent and undeclared voters, in addition to the younger demographic who would be leading society in the years ahead. She referenced the language on page 12, lines 12-31, of the bill, which indicate that open primaries would be abolished should HB 4 pass. She stated that voting for a political party, as opposed to voting for a person, undermines the responsibilities and the credibility of the candidates, and it forces voters to choose an ideology.

[3:49:29 PM](#)

JAMES ALDRIDGE, representing self, testified in "adamant" opposition to HB 4. He contended that the numbers shared by the bill sponsor were "fluff," as 99.8 percent of voters had correctly filled out the ballots. He emphasized that the majority of Alaskans voted for RCV, and for this reason it should not be abandoned.

[3:50:40 PM](#)

THERESE LEWANDOWSKI, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She read the following written remarks [copy included in the committee packet]:

I am against this bill.

Open Primaries provide Alaskan citizens of all or no political affiliation to vote their choice based on the candidate's qualifications and not on their political party. It eliminates multiple ballots which is always confusing for the voter.

Ranked Choice Voting allows a similar choice - to vote for the candidate, the person. It encourages voters to ask questions and research the candidate and not rely on a political party to think for them. It then allows a voter to choose 4, if they wish, and rank them in order of preference!

How often I have wished I could do that election after election.

This gives the voter much more say in electing our politicians. And it makes candidates prove up on why they are running and what they can actually offer citizens of this state.

Lastly - the majority voted this into statute in 2020. Legislators repealing it through a bill is like taking their voting power away from them.

[3:52:23 PM](#)

JOE NELSON, Chairman, Sealaska, testified in opposition to HB 4, explaining that RCV was initiated to remedy the partisan issues across the country. He opined that RCV has been working. He pointed out that Native Alaskan's [political] affiliation falls across the spectrum, and he expressed the hope that "common sense would prevail" so all voices would be heard.

[3:54:17 PM](#)

PAT RACE, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He informed the committee that he is a volunteer board member for Alaskans for Better Elections. He discussed party representation, indicating that because the majority of legislators are members of either the democratic or republican party, they are not representative of most Alaskans. He expressed the belief that it would be wrong to repeal RCV so soon after Alaskans voted on the issue, and he argued that there is no need to rush this issue. He encouraged the legislature to set HB 4 aside in exchange for discussing real problems in the state.

[3:56:47 PM](#)

SALLY GATES, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She pointed out that the majority of Alaskan voters had voted for RCV in 2020, and now, less than three years later, members of this legislature are trying to cast aside the will of Alaskan voters. She expressed the opinion that this is anti-democratic. She noted that she, along with many Alaskans, are not affiliated with one particular party. She said that closing primaries and eliminating RCV would drastically reduce the options for voters. She encouraged legislators to vote "no" on the bill.

[3:58:07 PM](#)

MICKEY BARKER, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. He expressed the opinion that a slim majority of Alaskans voted for RCV, as outside money had pushed propaganda and promoted lies in regard to RCV. He discussed the disenfranchisement of voters and numerous ballots that were thrown out.

[4:00:06 PM](#)

DONNA GOLDSMITH, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She conveyed that in 2020 over half of registered voters voted for Ballot Measure 2, which has allowed every vote to count, regardless of political affiliation. She urged the legislature to listen to the will of the people who wanted to change a system because it was not inclusive of a variety of political affiliations and values. She indicated that the repeal of RCV would disempower voters. She encouraged a "no" vote on HB 4.

[4:02:28 PM](#)

DAVID KASSER, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He stated that RCV has allowed moderate ideologies to be discussed, requiring voters to understand the complexities of each candidate. He argued that this makes for better, more informed voters. He urged the committee to "kill" HB 4.

[4:03:38 PM](#)

ODETTE EDGAR, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She summarized her experience with RCV, noting that the ballot box machines had rejected erroneous ballots, but allowed voters to fix it on the spot. She emphasized her trust in the election system.

[4:06:03 PM](#)

LAURA STATS, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She urged the committee to postpone or reconsider taking action on RCV so soon after it was voted in by the citizenry. She argued that postponing this would allow more time for people to learn the process. She continued that it is too soon to "kibosh" the will of the people. She said that she voted for RCV, expressing the belief that it is a way to move away from extremism, which is "tearing the fabric of the nation apart."

[4:08:04 PM](#)

PATTY ITCHOAK, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She opined that only one candidate from each political party should be on the ballot. She argued that RCV essentially dilutes the vote count, which is discouraging her from voting in the future. She referenced the low voter turnout in the [2020] election. She reiterated her support for the repeal of RCV.

[4:09:22 PM](#)

ZACHARY MACINTYRE, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He explained that he, like many Alaskans, never fit into one established political box. He stated that RCV has allowed him to vote outside these boxes. He added that RCV is the strongest defense against extremism.

[4:11:10 PM](#)

MARK DESINGER, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He explained that RCV produces a winner with the most support across the entire electorate. He continued that RCV reduces exhausted votes, adding that even if his first-choice candidate may not have won, all his votes have counted. He continued to explain that RCV has allowed him to vote for, rather than against, a candidate, and it allows him to vote his preference rather than vote for someone who would be the most electable. He stated that RCV would lessen the cost to the state, as it would eliminate the need for run-off elections.

[4:13:49 PM](#)

JEFFREY BARNHART, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. He expressed the opinion that Ballot Measure 2, which combined the establishment of an RCV system and the elimination of dark money, was an attempt to deliberately fool or mislead voters. He shared his belief that most voters were voting on the initiative to eliminate dark money rather than RCV. He stated that many Alaskan voters have been disenfranchised by the RCV system, which he described as confusing and unfair. He encouraged a return to the traditional voting system.

[4:15:39 PM](#)

JANET MORRISON, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She shared that in her experience as a poll worker, people were confused by RCV. She questioned what happened to mistaken question ballots, absentee ballots, and absentee in-person ballots. She shared a personal anecdote.

[4:17:43 PM](#)

JAMES HARPRING, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. He asserted that the RCV initiative was funded with out-of-state "black money." He expressed his support for the repeal of RCV and a return to the traditional voting system.

[4:19:56 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:19 p.m. to 4:21 p.m.

[4:21:21 PM](#)

CATHERINE MCCARTHY, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She shared that she felt liberated by RCV, as she was no longer "forced" to deal with a closed primary system. She urged the committee to oppose the proposed legislation.

[4:23:10 PM](#)

JUNE ROTHMAN, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He thanked the Division of Elections staff for implementing RCV and launching a "tremendous" educational campaign. He said he took exception to the implication that Alaskans were less capable than Australians or Irish, who have been using RCV successfully for many decades. He expressed the belief that RCV is a tremendous asset for the state. He asked the legislature not to abandon RCV, or to discount the lessons that have yet to be learned.

[4:25:44 PM](#)

COLLEEN FORD, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She argued that RCV and open primaries must be preserved, as this allows independence from the two major political parties. She opined that Alaskans have never fit comfortably within the two-party system and shared her belief that the repeal of RCV would bring the state back to "political colonization."

[4:26:38 PM](#)

MIKE MILLIGAN, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He expressed support for RCV because it has given him more power as a voter, at the expense of political parties, which he likened to limited liability corporations. He opined that the

bill would return power to the political parties. He asked the committee not to advance HB 4.

[4:29:02 PM](#)

JANET JAHNSAN, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She characterized the proposed legislation as disrespectful to all the voters who voted in favor of RCV. She urged the committee to listen to the overwhelming support for RCV that was voiced today. Furthermore, she expressed support for open primaries, which have allowed all options to be considered. She encouraged the committee to oppose HB 4.

[4:30:21 PM](#)

ERIC JORDAN, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He expressed the understanding that the partisan party primaries often favor the most extreme candidates, and this often leads to a choice between the "lesser of two evils." He expressed strong support for RCV and opposition to HB 4.

[4:31:55 PM](#)

LUIN MCCABE, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She pointed out that RCV was one of three subjects on Ballot Measure 2, which was sold on the promise of eliminating dark money. She expressed the understanding that millions of dollars in out-of-state money had flooded into Alaska in support of RCV during the 2020 campaign season. She questioned why out-of-state interests had wanted influence in Alaska elections and why citizens were deceived with false advertising. She asserted that RCV allows for multiple selections, which diminishes the notion of "one vote per person." Further, she indicated that the complexity of RCV has eliminated the possibility of hand counts. She shared a personal anecdote.

[4:34:31 PM](#)

KELLY FISHLER, representing self, testified in support of HB 4, describing RCV as too complicated and complex. She said she wanted her vote to count. She opined that RCV favored "middle of the road" candidates who were not as well liked as the election results would indicate. Further, she suggested that the additional information on the RCV ballots has resulted in more exhausted ballots. She suggested that low voter turnout was an indication that RCV is not working.

[4:36:26 PM](#)

GRIFFIN PLUSH, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He discussed voter turnout, claiming that it was the highest it had been since 2014 for the regular primary election. For the regular general election, voter turnout was comparable to previous midterm general elections, he asserted. He expressed the belief that Alaskans are capable of learning and adjusting to the new system and need time to do so. He referenced exhausted ballots, explaining that some people made the choice not to mark all three categories. Concerning exhausted ballots, he cautioned against assuming that people do not know what they are doing. He addressed the "spoiler effect," indicating that RCV has allowed candidates to run with less institutional support.

[4:39:22 PM](#)

DEBBIE GOZDOR, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She said she found RCV confusing and expressed her frustration with the system. She urged the committee to support the proposed legislation.

[4:41:26 PM](#)

ROBERT HOCKEMA, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He responded to the claim that exhausted ballots were discarded from the final total, which he described as misleading. He explained the RCV process in detail, indicating that many individuals intentionally had chosen not to vote second, third, and fourth options because the first choice was the only candidate that satisfied their (indisc.). He explained that this process is referred to as "ballot exhaustion" and likened it to a runoff election. He pointed out that like runoff elections, RCV involved multiple rounds of voting that some choose not to participate in. He reminded members that the 2022 midterm had the lowest voter turnout across the entire nation since 2014. He urged the committee to oppose the bill.

[4:44:09 PM](#)

DONNA STEINFORT, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. She noted her frustration with the closed primary system, as it did not allow her to vote for the candidate of her choice. As an elected official, she found that voters generally liked RCV once they understood the system. RCV forced candidates to speak to the issues, she said, and reduced the "stranglehold" of

political parties on the election process. Further, she argued that she was given a greater voice by ranking candidates. She urged a "no" vote on HB 4.

[4:45:49 PM](#)

MARK SPRINGER, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He expressed the opinion that Alaskans deserve to be represented by the "best and brightest," and RCV has magnified the ability to represent the necessary leaders to progress into the twenty-first century. He argued that running for office is a "pay to play" proposition, as party loyalty finishes ahead of the candidates' willingness to serve the state. He expressed the belief that RCV has alleviated this by loosening the "iron first grip" parties have sought to impose on candidates and election office holders, giving all Alaskans an opportunity and a voice.

[4:47:47 PM](#)

MIKE GRUNST, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 4. He expressed the opinion that RCV is the best method to equalize the election field and allow voters to have their voices heard. Furthermore, he argued that RCV has taken the power away from the parties, and this has made candidates appeal to a wider selection of Alaskans, not just the extremes on either end of the political spectrum. As an Alaskan, he expressed exhaustion at having to vote against candidates. He stated that RCV has allowed him to choose the best candidate to represent him. He discussed the cost saving aspect of RCV, as it has eliminated the need for expensive runoff elections. He emphasized that RCV is simple, easy to use, effective, and fiscally responsible.

[4:50:46 PM](#)

LIBBY DALTON, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. She pointed out that the RCV initiative had narrowly passed and asserted that the measure had been financed by dark money in an effort to reelect U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski. She discussed Scott Kendall's role in the initiative and claimed that Alaskans were blatantly deceived. She urged support for the bill and a return to the traditional system.

[4:53:59 PM](#)

BRONSON FRYE, President, Building and Construction Trade Council of Southcentral Alaska, testified in opposition to HB 4, stating

that he trusts Alaskans to know what is best for the state. He pointed out that RCV has been explicitly and directly approved by Alaskan voters, and he characterized the bill as a disrespectful attempt by politicians to overturn the will of the people. He described the bill sponsor's claim that HB 4 would be "upholding the will of the voters" as disingenuous when Alaskans voted for RCV in 2020. He urged legislators to "quit lying" to their constituents.

[4:55:54 PM](#)

BARBARA TYNDALL, representing self, testified in support of HB 4. As an election official, she recounted the confusion, frustration, and anger she witnessed at the ballot box during the most recent election. She discussed the audit of Ballot Measure 2 and claimed that Alaskans did not truly vote in favor of the initiative, which was funded by dark money. She discussed low voter turnout and urged the committee to pass the bill.

[4:58:07 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony. He announced that HB 4 was held over.

[4:58:43 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:58 p.m.