

**SENATE BILL NO. 179**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

**BY THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

**Introduced: 4/22/25**

**Referred: State Affairs, Community and Regional Affairs**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act relating to ranked-choice voting; and reducing the number of candidates in a**  
2 **general election from four to three."**

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 **\* Section 1.** AS 15.15.030 is amended to read:

5 **Sec. 15.15.030. Preparation of official ballot.** The director shall prepare all  
6 official ballots to facilitate fairness, simplicity, and clarity in the voting procedure, to  
7 reflect most accurately the intent of the voter, and to expedite the administration of  
8 elections. The following directives shall be followed when applicable:

9 (1) The director shall determine the size of the ballot, the type of print,  
10 necessary additional instruction notes to voters, and other similar matters of form not  
11 provided by law.

12 (2) The director shall number ballots in series to ensure simplicity and  
13 secrecy and to prevent fraud.

14 (3) The director shall contract for the preparation of ballots under

1 AS 36.30 (State Procurement Code).

2 (4) The director may not include on the ballot, as a part of a candidate's  
3 name, any honorary or assumed title or prefix but may include in the candidate's name  
4 any nickname or familiar form of a proper name of the candidate.

5 (5) The names of the candidates shall be placed in separate sections on  
6 the state general election ballot under the office designation to which they were  
7 nominated. If a candidate is registered as affiliated with a political party or political  
8 group, the party affiliation, if any, may be designated after the name of the candidate,  
9 upon request of the candidate. If a candidate has requested designation as nonpartisan  
10 or undeclared, that designation shall be placed after the name of the candidate. If a  
11 candidate is not registered as affiliated with a political party or political group and has  
12 not requested to be designated as nonpartisan or undeclared, the candidate shall be  
13 designated as undeclared. The lieutenant governor and the governor shall be included  
14 under the same section. Provision shall be made for voting for write-in candidates  
15 within each section. Paper ballots for the state general election shall be printed on  
16 white paper.

17 (6) The names of the candidates for each office shall be set out in the  
18 same order on ballots printed for use in each house district. The director shall  
19 randomly determine the order of the names of the candidates for state representative  
20 for each house district. The director shall rotate the order of placement of the names of  
21 candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, United States senator, United States  
22 representative, and state senator on the ballot for each house district.

23 (7) The general election ballot shall be designed with the names of  
24 candidates of each political party, and of any independent candidates qualified under  
25 AS 15.30.026, for the office of President and Vice-President of the United States  
26 placed in the same section on the ballot rather than the names of electors of President  
27 and Vice-President.

28 (8) The general or special election ballot shall be designed with the  
29 title and proposition for any initiative, referendum, or constitutional amendment  
30 formulated as prescribed by law and placed on the ballot in the manner prescribed by  
31 the director. When placed on the ballot, a state ballot proposition or ballot question

1 shall carry the number that was assigned to the petition for the proposition or question.  
 2 Provision shall be made for marking the proposition "Yes" or "No."

3 (9) The general or special election ballot shall be designed with the  
 4 question of whether a constitutional convention shall be called placed on the ballot in  
 5 the following manner: "Shall there be a constitutional convention?" Provision shall be  
 6 made for marking the question "Yes" or "No."

7 (10) A nonpartisan ballot shall be designed for each judicial district in  
 8 which a justice or judge is seeking retention in office. The ballot shall be divided into  
 9 four parts. Each part must bear a heading indicating the court to which the candidate is  
 10 seeking approval, and provision shall be made for marking each question "Yes" or  
 11 "No." Within each part, the question of whether the justice or judge shall be approved  
 12 or rejected shall be set out in substantially the following manner:

13 (A) "Shall . . . . . be retained as justice of the supreme court  
 14 for 10 years?";

15 (B) "Shall . . . . . be retained as judge of the court of appeals  
 16 for eight years?";

17 (C) "Shall . . . . . be retained as judge of the superior court  
 18 for six years?"; or

19 (D) "Shall . . . . . be retained as judge of the district court for  
 20 four years?"

21 (11) When the legislature by law authorizes a state debt for capital  
 22 improvements, the director shall place the question of whether the specific  
 23 authorization shall be ratified by placing the ballot title and question on the next  
 24 general election ballot, or on the special election ballot if a special election is held for  
 25 the purpose of ratifying the state debt for capital improvements before the time of the  
 26 next general election. Unless specifically provided otherwise in the Act authorizing  
 27 the debt, the ballot title shall, by the use of a few words in a succinct manner, indicate  
 28 the general subject of the Act. The question shall, by the use of a few sentences in a  
 29 succinct manner, give a true and impartial summary of the Act authorizing the state  
 30 debt. The question of whether state debt shall be contracted shall be assigned a letter  
 31 of the alphabet on the ballot. Provision shall be made for marking the question

1 substantially as follows:

2 "Bonds. . . . . Yes" or "Bonds. . . . . No,"

3 followed by an appropriate oval.

4 (12) The director may provide for the optical scanning of ballots where  
5 the requisite equipment is available.

6 (13) The director may provide for voting by use of electronically  
7 generated ballots by a voter who requests to use a machine that produces electronically  
8 generated ballots.

9 (14) The director shall include the following statement on the ballot:

10 A candidate's designated affiliation does not imply that the  
11 candidate is nominated or endorsed by the political party or group or  
12 that the party or group approves of or associates with that candidate,  
13 but only that the candidate is registered as affiliated with the political  
14 party or political group.

15 (15) Instead of the statement provided by (14) of this section, when  
16 candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States appear on a general  
17 election ballot, the director shall include the following statement on the ballot:

18 A candidate's designated affiliation does not imply that the  
19 candidate is nominated or endorsed by the political party or political  
20 group or that the political party or political group approves of or  
21 associates with that candidate, but only that the candidate is registered  
22 as affiliated with the party or group. The election for President and  
23 Vice-President of the United States is different. Some candidates for  
24 President and Vice-President are the official nominees of their political  
25 party.

26 (16) The director shall design the general election ballots so that the  
27 candidates are selected by ranked-choice voting.

28 (17) The director shall design the general election ballot to direct the  
29 voter to mark **up to two** candidates in order of preference [AND TO MARK AS  
30 MANY CHOICES AS THE VOTER WISHES], but not to assign the same ranking to  
31 more than one candidate for the same office.

1 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 15.15.350(e) is amended to read:

2 (e) When counting general election ballots,

3 (1) a ballot containing an overvote shall be considered an inactive  
4 ballot once the overvote is encountered at the highest ranking for a continuing  
5 candidate;

6 (2) if a ballot skips a ranking, then the election board shall count the  
7 next ranking [. IF THE NEXT RANKING IS ANOTHER SKIPPED RANKING, THE  
8 BALLOT SHALL BE CONSIDERED AN INACTIVE BALLOT ONCE THE  
9 SECOND SKIPPED RANKING IS ENCOUNTERED]; and

10 (3) in the event of a tie between the final two continuing candidates,  
11 the procedures in AS 15.15.460 and AS 15.20.430 - 15.20.530 shall apply to  
12 determine the winner of the general election; in the event of a tie between two  
13 candidates with the fewest votes, the tie shall be resolved by lot to determine which  
14 candidate is defeated.

15 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 15.25.010 is amended to read:

16 **Sec. 15.25.010. Provision for primary election.** Candidates for the elective  
17 state executive and state and national legislative offices shall be nominated in a  
18 primary election by direct vote of the people in the manner prescribed by this chapter.  
19 The primary election does not serve to determine the nominee of a political party or  
20 political group but serves only to narrow the number of candidates whose names will  
21 appear on the ballot at the general election. Except as provided in AS 15.25.100(d),  
22 only the **three** [FOUR] candidates who receive the greatest number of votes for any  
23 office shall advance to the general election.

24 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 15.25.100(a) is amended to read:

25 (a) Except as provided in (b) - (g) of this section, of the names of candidates  
26 that appear on the primary election ballot under AS 15.25.010, the director shall place  
27 on the general election ballot only the names of the **three** [FOUR] candidates  
28 receiving the greatest number of votes for an office. For purposes of this subsection  
29 and (b) of this section, candidates for lieutenant governor and governor are treated as a  
30 single paired unit.

31 \* **Sec. 5.** AS 15.25.100(b) is amended to read:

1 (b) If two candidates tie in having the **third** [FOURTH] greatest number of  
 2 votes for an office in the primary election, the director shall determine under (g) of  
 3 this section which candidate's name shall appear on the general election ballot.

4 \* **Sec. 6.** AS 15.25.100(c) is amended to read:

5 (c) Except as otherwise provided in (d) of this section, if a candidate  
 6 nominated at the primary election dies, withdraws, resigns, becomes disqualified from  
 7 holding office for which the candidate is nominated, or is certified as being  
 8 incapacitated in the manner prescribed by this section after the primary election and 64  
 9 or more days before the general election, the vacancy shall be filled by the director by  
 10 replacing the withdrawn candidate with the candidate who received the **fourth**  
 11 [FIFTH] most votes in the primary election.

12 \* **Sec. 7.** AS 15.58.020(a) is amended to read:

13 (a) Each general election pamphlet must contain

14 (1) photographs and campaign statements submitted by eligible  
 15 candidates for elective office in the region;

16 (2) information and recommendations filed under AS 15.58.050 on  
 17 judicial officers subject to a retention election in the region;

18 (3) a map of the house district or districts of the region;

19 (4) sample ballots for house districts of the region;

20 (5) an absentee ballot application;

21 (6) for each ballot proposition submitted to the voters by initiative or  
 22 referendum petition or by the legislature,

23 (A) the full text of the proposition specifying constitutional or  
 24 statutory provisions proposed to be affected;

25 (B) the ballot title and the summary of the proposition prepared  
 26 by the director or by the lieutenant governor;

27 (C) a statement of the costs to the state of implementing the law  
 28 proposed in an initiative, or of voter approval or rejection of the act that is the  
 29 subject of a referendum;

30 (D) a neutral summary of the proposition prepared by the  
 31 Legislative Affairs Agency;

1 (E) statements submitted that advocate voter approval or  
2 rejection of the proposition not to exceed 500 words;

3 (7) for each bond question, a statement of the scope of each project as  
4 it appears in the bond authorization;

5 (8) a maximum of two pages of material submitted under  
6 AS 15.58.040 by each political party;

7 (9) additional information on voting procedures that the lieutenant  
8 governor considers necessary;

9 (10) for the question whether a constitutional convention shall be  
10 called,

11 (A) a full statement of the question placed on the ballot;

12 (B) statements not to exceed 500 words that advocate voter  
13 approval or rejection of the question;

14 (11) under AS 37.13.170, the Alaska permanent fund annual income  
15 statement and balance sheet for the two fiscal years preceding the publication of the  
16 election pamphlet;

17 (12) under AS 15.10.090, notice of

18 (A) the establishment or abolition of a precinct;

19 (B) the designation, abolition, or modification of precinct  
20 boundaries; and

21 (C) a change in the location of a polling place;

22 (13) the following statement written in bold in a conspicuous location:

23 Each candidate may designate the political party or political  
24 group that the candidate is registered as affiliated with. A candidate's  
25 political party or political group designation on a ballot does not imply  
26 that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party or political  
27 group or that the party or group approves of or associates with that  
28 candidate.

29 In each race, you may vote for any candidate listed. If a primary  
30 election was held for a state office, United States senator, or United  
31 States representative, the **three** [FOUR] candidates who received the

1 most votes for the office in the primary election advanced to the  
 2 general election. However, if one of the **three** [FOUR] candidates who  
 3 received the most votes for an office at the primary election died,  
 4 withdrew, resigned, was disqualified, or was certified as incapacitated  
 5 64 days or more before the general election, the candidate who received  
 6 the **fourth** [FIFTH] most votes for the office advanced to the general  
 7 election.

8 At the general election, each candidate will be selected through  
 9 a ranked-choice voting process and the candidate with the greatest  
 10 number of votes will be elected. For a general election, you must rank  
 11 the candidates in the numerical order of your preference, ranking **up to**  
 12 **two** [AS MANY] candidates [AS YOU WISH]. Your second [,  
 13 THIRD, AND SUBSEQUENT] ranked **choice** [CHOICES] will be  
 14 counted only if the candidate you ranked first does not receive enough  
 15 votes to continue on to the next round of counting, so ranking a second  
 16 [, THIRD, OR SUBSEQUENT CHOICE] will not hurt your first-  
 17 choice candidate. Your ballot will be counted regardless of whether you  
 18 choose to rank one **or** [,] two [, OR MORE] candidates for each office,  
 19 but it will not be counted if you assign the same ranking to more than  
 20 one candidate for the same office.

21 \* **Sec. 8.** AS 15.58.020(c) is amended to read:

22 (c) Notwithstanding (a) of this section, if a pamphlet is prepared and published  
 23 under AS 15.58.010 for a

24 (1) primary election, the pamphlet must contain the following  
 25 statement written in bold in a conspicuous location, instead of the statement provided  
 26 by (a)(13) of this section:

27 In each race, you may vote for any candidate listed. The three  
 28 [FOUR] candidates who receive the most votes for a state office,  
 29 United States senator, or United States representative will advance to  
 30 the general election. However, if, after the primary election and 64 days  
 31 or more before the general election, one of the **three** [FOUR]

1 candidates who received the most votes for an office at the primary  
 2 election dies, withdraws, resigns, is disqualified, or is certified as  
 3 incapacitated, the candidate who received the **fourth** [FIFTH] most  
 4 votes for the office will advance to the general election.

5 Each candidate may designate the political party or political group that the candidate is  
 6 registered as affiliated with. A candidate's political party or political group designation on a  
 7 ballot does not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party or group or that  
 8 the party or group approves of or associates with that candidate;

9 (2) special primary election, the pamphlet must contain the following  
 10 statement written in bold in a conspicuous location, instead of the statement provided  
 11 by (a)(13) of this section:

12 In each race, you may vote for any candidate listed. The **three**  
 13 [FOUR] candidates who receive the most votes for a state office or  
 14 United States senator will advance to the special election. However, if,  
 15 after the special primary election and 64 days or more before the  
 16 special election, one of the **three** [FOUR] candidates who received the  
 17 most votes for a state office or United States senator at the primary  
 18 election dies, withdraws, resigns, is disqualified, or is certified as  
 19 incapacitated, the candidate who received the **fourth** [FIFTH] most  
 20 votes for the office will advance to the general election. Each candidate  
 21 may designate the political party or political group that the candidate is  
 22 registered as affiliated with. A candidate's political party or political  
 23 group designation on a ballot does not imply that the candidate is  
 24 nominated or endorsed by the party or group or that the party or group  
 25 approves of or associates with that candidate.