

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 10, 2025

1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Andrew Gray, Chair
Representative Chuck Kopp, Vice Chair
Representative Ted Eischeid
Representative Genevieve Mina
Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Mia Costello
Representative Jubilee Underwood

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association

Donald Handeland - Eagle River

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 21

"An Act relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of age; and relating to confidentiality of voter registration and preregistration records of minors at least 16 years of age."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 21

SHORT TITLE: VOTER PREREGISTRATION FOR MINORS

SPONSOR(S) : REPRESENTATIVE(S) STORY

01/22/25	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(H)	STA, JUD
02/11/25	(H)	STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120

02/11/25	(H)	Heard & Held
02/11/25	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
02/13/25	(H)	STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/13/25	(H)	Heard & Held
02/13/25	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
02/20/25	(H)	STA AT 3:15 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/20/25	(H)	Moved CSHB 21(STA) Out of Committee
02/20/25	(H)	MINUTE(STA)
02/21/25	(H)	STA RPT CS(STA) 4DP 2DNP
02/21/25	(H)	DP: HOLLAND, HIMSCHOOT, STORY, CARRICK
02/21/25	(H)	DNP: MCCABE, MOORE
03/10/25	(H)	JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

DONALD HANDELAND, Appointee
Board of Governors
Alaska Bar Association
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the governor's appointee to the Alaska Bar Association's Board of Governors.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented CSHB 21(STA).

HONOR MILLER-AUSTIN, Staff
Representative Andi Story
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave an overview of the committee packet for CSHB 21(STA), on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor.

MARIAN CLOUGH, Member
Alaska League of Women Voters;
Juneau League of Women Voters
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during the hearing on CSHB 21(STA).

MARA EARLY, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during the hearing on CSHB 21(STA).

ALEX KOPLIN, Member
Kenai Peninsula Votes
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of HB 21.

CAROL BEECHER, Director
Division of Elections
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on CSHB 21(STA).

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:31:23 PM](#)

CHAIR ANDREW GRAY called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Representatives Underwood, Costello, Eischeid, and Gray were present at the call to order. Representatives Mina, Vance, and Kopp arrived as the meeting was in progress.

The committee took a brief at-ease at 1:31 p.m.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S): Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar

[1:32:30 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY announced that the first order of business would be a confirmation hearing for the Alaska Bar Association's Board of Governors.

[1:33:05 PM](#)

DONALD HANDELAND, Appointee, Board of Governors, Alaska Bar Association, shared that he is a transportation engineer from Nome, Alaska, and was appointed to the board last year. He spoke to the importance of the public members on professional boards to ensure that different perspectives are represented.

[1:33:56 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY opened public testimony on Mr. Handeland's appointment. After ascertaining that no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[1:34:38 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 1:34 p.m.

[1:34:49 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY noted that the committee was going at-ease to "sign a paper."

[1:34:53 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 1:34 p.m. to 1:37 p.m.

[1:37:04 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY moved to advance the confirmation of Donald Handeland, appointee to the Board of Governor's of the Alaska Bar Association, to the joint session of the House and Senate for consideration. He reminded members that signing the reports regarding appointment to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees, and that the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection. There being no objection, the confirmation was advanced.

HB 21-VOTER PREREGISTRATION FOR MINORS

[1:37:26 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 21, "An Act relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of age; and relating to confidentiality of voter registration and preregistration records of minors at least 16 years of age." [Before the committee was CSHB 21(STA).]

[1:37:47 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented CSHB 21(STA). She paraphrased the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 21 aims to engage future generations of voters and help them become informed, confident, active and voting citizens. As civic engagement with

our young people declines across the nation, the concern increases for the health of our democracy.

This bill allows youth, who are aged 16, to voluntarily preregister to vote. This puts them in line to automatically be registered to vote, after their residency has been confirmed, and they have turned 18. Currently, Alaskans who are 17 can register within 90 days of their 18th birthday. By lowering the minimum age for preregistration to 16, we give young Alaskans more time to understand the importance of the voting process and develop the habits of engaged voters.

Pre-registration is already in place in 23 states, and it has led to higher voter turnout among young people. In Alaska 82% of residents are registered voters, however only 55% of those registered voters cast ballots in the last general election. Studies show that pre-registration increases civic engagement while youth are waiting to vote, and increases voter turnout when they become eligible.

This bill also importantly corrects a flaw in current statute in order to ensure the privacy and safety of individuals under the age of 18. Specifically, it establishes that the address and telephone number of any person under the age of 18 who registers or preregisters to vote shall remain confidential and not be subject to public inspection.

I respectfully request your support in the passage of HB 21.

[1:42:47 PM](#)

HONOR MILLER-AUSTIN, Staff, Representative Andi Story, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor, described the documents in the committee packet.

[1:44:52 PM](#)

MARIAN CLOUGH, Alaska League of Women Voters (LWV); Juneau League of Women Voters (LWV), gave invited testimony in support of HB 21. She shared her belief that HB 21 would encourage civic engagement and participation. Preregistration supports good voting habits by allowing young people to be involved in

civic education early when they have family support while still living at home. She said the bill would help to eliminate barriers to voting and encourage young people to realize they have a voice while giving them the confidence and tools to exercise their rights. She concluded with a historical background on the LWV and its role today.

[1:47:55 PM](#)

MARA EARLY, representing self, gave invited testimony in support of HB 21. She stated her strong support for voter preregistration for minors because it would allow teenagers a longer transition period and highlight the importance of voting at a time they can focus on it, rather than during an overwhelming time of transition at the age of 18. She opined that allowing 16-year-olds to preregister would support a life of voting in the future.

[1:50:50 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY opened public testimony on HB 21.

[1:51:18 PM](#)

ALEX KOPLIN, Kenai Peninsula Votes, testified in support of HB 21, which he characterized as a great bill because it would cover the young people who don't register for their annual PFD. He pointed out that most 17-year-olds are getting ready for their next adventure, and this is one less thing they would have to do. He added that the bill would provide a hands-on experience that is vital to civics education.

[1:54:04 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY closed public testimony on HB 21.

[1:54:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COSTELLO asked what would happen with the minor's information after preregistering and whether it would be kept private until they are of voting age.

[1:55:09 PM](#)

CAROL BEECHER, Director, Division of Elections (DOE), Office of the Lieutenant Governor, assured the committee that the information would be completely inaccessible to the public.

[1:55:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD asked for the bill sponsor's vision for implementation and whether teacher or administrators would be giving guidance on party affiliation.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said according to district policies, teachers are supposed to be nonpartisan in their professional work and if they do their job well, students do not know their party affiliation. She said she envisioned teachers offering hands on information in the classroom with regard to filling out the voter registration form. She said in other states, this policy has helped encourage parents and guardians to register to vote.

[1:58:05 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD sought clarification on how the minor's voting status would be changed in DOE's system once they turn 18.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY stated that 45 days before the minor's 18th birthday, the preregistered voter is in "pending" status at which point a notice is mailed to the address on file to confirm their home address.

MS. BEECHER confirmed that the minor's 18th birthday triggers the mailed notice with request for response to confirm their home address.

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD sought to confirm that the minor would not become registered if they don't respond to the notice.

MS. BEECHER said that is correct.

[1:59:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID sought to clarify when the notice would be mailed to the preregistered voter.

MS. BEECHER clarified that it would be mailed 90 days [before their 18th birthday] to give the individual time to respond.

[2:00:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COSTELLO asked how the proposed process would differ from the current preregistration process.

MS. BEECHER said currently, 17-year-olds can preregister if they will be 18 on or before election day. Once DOE confirms their information, the individual is sent a registration card and considered registered to vote at that time.

[2:02:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked how DOE partners with school districts and other entities on education and outreach to minors.

MS. BEECHER described the division's "youth at the booth" program, which allows 16-year-olds to work the polls.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA asserted that most of the outreach is currently conducted by nonprofits and civic education teachers.

MS. BEECHER answered in the affirmative.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked how people would be educated on the new process.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said the bill would be a hands-on tool for students and educators and spoke to existing outreach efforts by the LWV.

[2:05:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD asked how the bill would interact with the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) automatic voter registration (AVR) process.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY deferred to Director Beecher.

[2:06:03 PM](#)

MS. BEECHER said it would not interface with the AVR.

CHAIR GRAY announced that CSHB 21(STA) was held over.

[2:06:58 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m.