

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

March 13, 2025

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Vice Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Robert Yundt

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 64

"An Act relating to elections; relating to voters; relating to voting; relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of age; relating to voter registration; relating to the Alaska Public Offices Commission; relating to synthetic media in electioneering communications; relating to campaign signs; relating to public official financial disclosures; relating to the crime of unlawful interference with voting in the first degree; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 49

"An Act relating to workplace violence protective orders; relating to the crime of violating a protective order; relating to the powers of district judges and magistrates; amending Rules 4 and 65, Alaska Rules of Civil Procedure, and Rule 9, Alaska Rules of Administration; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 120

"An Act establishing the Alaska Climate Change Emergency Response Commission; and relating to the powers and duties of the Alaska Climate Change Emergency Response Commission."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 64

SHORT TITLE: ELECTIONS

SPONSOR(s): RULES

01/24/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/25	(S)	STA, FIN
01/30/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
01/30/25	(S)	Heard & Held
01/30/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
02/04/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/04/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/11/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/11/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/11/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/13/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 49

SHORT TITLE: WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDERS

SPONSOR(s): CLAMAN

01/17/25	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/17/25
01/22/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(S)	STA, JUD
03/13/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a summary of SB 64.

CAROL BEECHER, Director
Division of Elections
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided concerns on SB 64.

AYDEN NICHOL, Democracy Fellow
Alaska Center
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 64.

DONNA GOLDSMITH, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 64.

MARLENE WATSON, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 64.

LINDA MORNING, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 64.

SENATOR MATT CLAMAN, District H
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 49.

BREANNA KAKARUK, Staff
Senator Matt Claman
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided the sectional analysis for SB 49.

BRENDA STANFILL, Executive Director
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 49.

EILEEN ARNOLD, Executive Director
Tundra Women's Coalition
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 49.

JAMES COCKRELL, Commissioner
Department of Public Safety
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on SB 49.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:45 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Bjorkman, Wielechowski, Yundt and Chair Kawasaki.

SB 64-ELECTIONS

[3:31:53 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 64 "An Act relating to elections; relating to voters; relating to voting; relating to voter preregistration for minors at least 16 years of age; relating to voter registration; relating to the Alaska Public Offices Commission; relating to synthetic media in electioneering communications; relating to campaign signs; relating to public official financial disclosures; relating to the crime of unlawful interference with voting in the first degree; and providing for an effective date."

On March 11, 2025, the committee adopted a committee substitute (CS), version H, as the working document.

[3:32:39 PM](#)

DAVID DUNSMORE, Staff, Senator Bill Wielechowski, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, stated that SB 64 is the omnibus election package from the Senate Rules Committee and the previously adopted committee substitute is the working document.

[3:33:36 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked Director Beecher to state the concerns the Division of Elections has regarding SB 64. He said his office has been struggling to find a way to adequately and successfully track ballots without spending a lot of money.

[3:33:30 PM](#)

CAROL BEECHER, Director, Division of Elections, Anchorage, Alaska, provided the division's three concerns with SB 64. The first concern is ballot tracking. She said the division has heard of new technologies that might allow for tracking ballots in transit between other states and Alaska but currently lacks that capability to track an envelope during its entire journey. While outgoing ballot envelopes have barcodes, there is no system in place to track its return. She said Alaska's mail must route through the Anchorage hub to have the postal code read; rural post offices can't read postal codes. Ballots can't be tracked like Amazon packages; the divisions technology isn't capable of that.

[3:36:55 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if the division can achieve the same ability as Anchorage, where a person can check the status of their ballot online.

[3:37:10 PM](#)

MS. BEECHER answered that the division currently has the capability for voters to go online and see if their ballot was received but that's the extent of what the division can do.

[3:37:39 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked what other concerns the division has concerning SB 64.

[3:37:47 PM](#)

MS. BEECHER stated that another concern would be another part of ballot curing found in Section 41, page 21. The division's voting system doesn't show when a voter certificate is reviewed or if a ballot has been counted. Ballots are reviewed by boards and put through a series of different codes. The public list shows a time and date stamp once the ballot has been counted and the public list will only show if a ballot was fully counted, partially counted, or rejected.

[3:39:33 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI read the six items located in Section 41, page 21. He said these are the six items the ballot tracking system would allow a voter to do:

[Original punctuation provided.]

- Confirm that the voter's ballot has been sent by the division;
- Track the date of the ballot's delivery to the voter;
- Confirm the division's receipt of the voter's ballot;
- Determine whether the voter's certificate has been reviewed;
- Determine whether the voter's ballot has been counted; and
- Provide the information necessary to cure a rejected ballot.

He stated that some of these elements are doable, and some would be a problem or maybe impossible to do.

[3:40:18 PM](#)

MS. BEECHER said another concern was regarding Section 25, on page 13, and raises a question about whether the ranking result requirements also apply to hand counts. The division is interpreting this as asking if poll workers in hand-count

precincts are expected to report all rankings on election night. She said the division's last concern is Section 26, on page 14, and may need further discussion with the Division to determine what data level is truly useful to the public. She said too much information or detail at a precinct level may risk voter privacy.

[3:42:19 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked what precinct level data the division would be concerned with.

[3:42:38 PM](#)

MS. BEECHER answered that when you are reporting detailed count codes, like partial rejections, at the precinct level it can risk voter privacy. She said with tiny precincts it's easier for IT individuals to analyze data and infer how the entire precinct had voted. Many states limit reporting to the house district level to protect voter anonymity.

[3:44:05 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN stated he is not understanding what the codes are, what the codes mean and the concern about releasing data. He asked Ms. Beecher to talk offline for more clarity.

[3:44:46 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that the current version of SB 64 is not the final bill. He said his office has heard the concerns from constituents about same day voter registration and the synthetic media provision that was removed. The committee will continue to work on ballot tracking and solutions that will best accommodate everyone.

[3:46:00 PM](#)

SENATOR YUNDT said he wasn't aware that the synthetic media portion of the bill was removed and asked for an explanation.

[3:46:25 PM](#)

MR. DUNSMORE answered that the synthetic media portion of SB 64 was removed at the last committee meeting with version H. He said there is discussion about possibly reintroducing parts of the synthetic media provision that protects broadcasters from unnecessary liability.

[3:47:13 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI explained that the committee removed the synthetic media provision because the provision had less to do with elections than other items. There's currently an artificial

intelligence (AI) task force and other bills addressing AI. He said there is an interest within the committee in revisiting synthetic media provision for SB 64.

[3:48:17 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI opened public testimony on SB 64.

[3:48:47 PM](#)

AYDEN NICHOL, Democracy Fellow, The Alaska Center, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 64:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Alongside protecting our air and water and producing clean energy, building a strong democracy is an important part of our work toward a sustainable and just Alaska.

As you know, the state has a longstanding track record of failing to protect the right to vote in rural areas. Routinely, polling places open late - or fail to open entirely. Post office closures and delays prevent ballots cast on-time from being counted. Ballots are discarded without giving voters the opportunity to correct mistakes.

Fortunately, many of the provisions in Senate Bill 64 would address these failures. We are particularly encouraged by the proposed addition of a rural community liaison to make sure that the Division of Elections is addressing rural voters' needs.

But while we support the passage of this bill, we also believe that it may go further to protect Alaskans' voting rights. House Bill 43, introduced by Representative Schrage, holds a provision that would begin early voting 30 days before the election, rather than the current 15 days. We can't, in one session, address the huge array of logistical challenges that delay and prevent rural voting, but we can give voters and the Division more time to respond as they arise. The more time they have, the less likely it is that a properly-cast ballot will go uncounted.

We urge you to work to make sure that this provision is included in the final version of the bill. And we

appreciate your hard work to make sure that every Alaskan's vote is counted in every election.

[3:50:51 PM](#)

DONNA GOLDSMITH, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 64 and stated that voting is a fundamental right and civic duty. SB 64 strengthens that right by removing key barriers by:

- Allowing same-day registration
- Eliminating the outdated witness signature requirement- which caused hundreds of ballots to be voided in the last election for no rational reason
- Providing a ballot curing process
- Including prepaid return envelopes

SB 64 makes voting more accessible and ensures more voices are heard.

[3:52:37 PM](#)

MARLENE WATSON, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 64 and agreed with the previous testifier. She stated her belief that special needs ballots should not be thrown out because of mistakes made by election officials, creating a recurring absentee voter base list would reduce the number of mail-in ballot applications and appointing a community liaison would help elections run smoother in rural areas.

[3:54:04 PM](#)

LINDA MORNING, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified in support of SB 64 and agreed with the previous testifiers.

[3:56:04 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that his office supports and wants the witness verification system, but the state can't afford a \$5 million dollar system right now.

[3:57:31 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SB 64 in committee.

SB 49-WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDERS

[3:57:35 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 49 "An Act relating to workplace violence protective orders; relating to the crime of violating a protective order; relating to the powers of district judges and magistrates; amending Rules

4 and 65, Alaska Rules of Civil Procedure, and Rule 9, Alaska Rules of Administration; and providing for an effective date."

3:58:00 PM

SENATOR MATT CLAMAN, District H, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 49, introduced the bill:

[Original punctuation provided.]

A few years ago, a member of the legal community contacted our office about a situation where a former employee made a credible threat that he intended to go into the employer's worksite and shoot as many people as he could. When the attorney representing the employer tried to obtain a restraining order, she realized that to protect the employer, she would need to file a civil lawsuit and ask for a temporary restraining order. That process takes several days to complete and often costs thousands of dollars. In contrast, people seeking a domestic violence protective order can usually get the court order within one day.

Senate Bill 49, modeled after Alaska's domestic violence protective order process, allows an employer to file a petition for a protective order against an individual under two circumstances: first, an individual has committed an act of violence against an employer or employee at the workplace and second, an individual made a threat of violence against the employer or employee that may be carried out at the workplace. A violation of the provisions of the protective order would be the crime of violating a protective order, which is a class A misdemeanor.

We worked closely with the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault on our legislation last year that is now Senate Bill 49 to ensure that this legislation provides employers with a more effective way to protect their workplace without reaching into the personal lives of their employees.

Eleven states have laws providing for the issuance of protective or restraining orders that are specific to workplace violence. Utah is the most recent addition to this list, which passed a workplace violence protective order law in 2023.

[4:00:13 PM](#)

BREANNA KAKARUK, Staff, Senator Matt Claman, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided the sectional analysis for SB 49:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Senate Bill 49
Sectional Analysis – Version N

Section 1

AS 11.56.740. Violating a protective order.

Amends AS 11.56.740(a) by adding a new subsection (4) to specify that a person commits the crime of violating a protective order if the person knowingly commits or attempts to commit an act that violates the provisions listed under the workplace violence protective order statutes.

Section 2

AS 11.56.740. Violating a protective order.

Amends AS 11.56.740(c) by adding the workplace violence protective order statutes to the meaning of "protective order."

[4:00:48 PM](#)

MS. KAKARUK continued the sectional analysis:

Section 3

AS 18.65.530. Mandatory arrest for crimes involving domestic violence, violation of protective orders, and violation of conditions of release.

Amends AS 18.65.530(a) by clarifying that the mandatory arrest statute for crimes involving domestic violence, violation of protective orders, and violation of conditions of release is subject to the requirements of sec. 1.

Section 4

AS 18.65.540. Central registry of protective orders.

Amends AS 18.65.540(a) to add the workplace violence protective order statutes to the central registry of protective orders maintained by the Department of Public Safety.

Section 5

AS 18.65.540. *Central registry of protective orders.* Amends AS 18.65.540(b) to add the workplace violence protective order statutes to the list of protective orders a peace officer enters into the central registry within 24 hours of receiving.

[4:00:59 PM](#)

MS. KAKARUK continued with the sectional analysis:

Section 6

Amends AS 18.65 to add a new section: "Article 12A. Workplace Violence Protective Orders."

Sec. 18.65.875. Protective orders; eligible petitioners; relief.

Section (a) gives employers the ability to file a petition for a protective order against an individual who the employer reasonably believes: (1) committed an act of violence against the employer or an employee; or (2) made a threat of violence against the employer or an employee that can reasonably be construed as a threat that may be carried out at the employer's workplace. 1

Section 7

AS 22.15.100. *Functions and powers of district judge and magistrate.* Amends AS 22.15.100(9) by adding a new section (C) to give district judges and magistrates the power to issue a protective order in cases involving workplace violence.

Section 8

Uncodified law - Indirect court rule amendments Specifies amendments to: Rule 4, Alaska Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 9, Alaska Rules of Administration, relating to fees and service of process for a workplace violence protective order, and Rule 65, Alaska Rules of Civil Procedure, by changing the method for obtaining and the timing of temporary restraining orders.

Section 9

Uncodified law - applicability Makes sec. 8 conditional on approval by the two-thirds majority vote of each house required by art. IV, sec. 15,

Constitution of the State of Alaska for a court rule change.

Section 10

Effective Date If sec. 9 takes effect, it takes effect on January 1, 2026.

[4:01:57 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that in Section 6, line 8-9, the sectional says "employer". He asked why the section is limited to employers, what if an employee feels an individual is dangerous to an employee of a company or a threat is directed at a customer.

[4:02:44 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN answered that the reason behind the employer being allowed to file a workplace claim directly was that the employer should have control over the workplace. He noted that other states follow this approach and if an employee feels threatened the employee should go to their employer to pursue a workplace protective order, as should a customer.

[4:04:04 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked if the legislative information offices would be considered a workplace.

[4:04:25 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN answered yes.

[4:04:57 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced invited testimony on SB 49.

[4:05:15 PM](#)

BRENDA STANFILL, Executive Director, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), Juneau, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 49 and stated that ANDVSA, representing 24 programs statewide, served over 7,500 victims last year. In response to these programs support of victims, abusers or their families sometimes target shelters, especially in small communities where privacy is limited. She said since it's not always safe for victims to seek protective orders, SB 49 would allow programs to request workplace protective orders, helping protect both staff and clients.

[4:07:58 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked would a shelter be classified as an employer if someone at the shelter was threatened.

[4:08:23 PM](#)

MS. STANFILL answered SB 49 would not apply to the situation if the threat was not directed at the shelter or the staff of the shelter. She said the individual being threatened would need to get a personal protective order. If a staff member receives a phone call about a possible threat to the shelter or location, then SB 49 would apply.

[4:09:14 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked for clarification that "a person" can mean a company, organization, or non-profit.

[4:09:30 PM](#)

MS. STANFILL answered that with ANDVSA being a business, the shelter programs would be included in SB 49.

[4:09:50 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if a victim at a shelter is threatened but isn't an employee and the threat isn't against the employer, under SB 49 would the victim need to seek a domestic violence order.

[4:10:27 PM](#)

MS. STANFILL answered correct, if there wasn't a direct threat to the organization then the organization would not qualify under SB 49.

[4:10:39 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI stated that there may need to be more clarity in the definition section [AS 18.65.899] of "employer" on page 7, as it currently refers specifically to a person who employs others. It's unclear how this applies to organizations or nonprofits.

[4:11:12 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI said a court would define an organization or non-profit as a person; regarding Section AS 18.65.899.

[4:11:43 PM](#)

EILEEN ARNOLD, Executive Director, Tundra Women's Coalition (TWC), Bethel, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 49 and stated that workplaces like TWC, which shelter victims of violence, are sometimes directly threatened. In her 10 years as a director, she's rarely had to put staff on high alert, but when she has, it's been memorable. She said many victims don't seek protective orders due to fear, distrust of law enforcement,

or concern about revealing their location. She said remote shelters face dangers, with abusers lingering nearby and threatening staff. Programs like TWC need tools to set clear boundaries and keep everyone safe.

[CHAIR KAWASAKI concluded invited testimony on SB 49.]

[4:15:19 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI [opened public testimony on SB 49; finding none,] he closed public testimony.

[4:15:51 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN commented that he agreed that under the definition of an employer in Section 7(3), AS. 18.65.899, a business would be a person, in the same way a business is a sole proprietorship.

[4:16:18 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI referenced page 7, lines 21-23, which says, "a person may not bring civil action for damages against an employer for seeking or failing to seek a protective order, unless an employer seeks a protective order for an illegitimate purpose." He gave an example of someone threatening to bomb a workplace and gives specific details of the crime, but no protective order is sought. However, later that person follows through with the bombing. He asked if the employer would still be shielded from liability.

[4:17:17 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN answered that since the situation represents an employer-employee relationship, it falls under workers' compensation. Creating separate civil liability outside that system might conflict with existing workers' compensation laws.

[4:17:41 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI wondered if the wording might be changed to cover situations where a neighbor or customer nearby is injured and might otherwise be prevented from filing a lawsuit.

[4:18:12 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN responded that he would review the wording.

[4:19:23 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked for an explanation on how the protective orders will work and what happens if a person comes back after a protective order is in place.

[4:19:41 PM](#)

JAMES COCKRELL, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety, Anchorage, Alaska, answered questions on SB 49 and said to issue a protective order, a judge or magistrate must first find probable cause. Once approved, law enforcement serves the order, and if the person violates the protective order by showing up at the workplace, the violator may be arrested. He said the order is also entered into APSIN so officers know it's been served and can act accordingly, resulting in an arrest.

[4:21:51 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SB 49 in committee.

[4:22:58 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 4:22 p.m.