

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE
JANUARY 20, 2026
3:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Vice Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Cathy Tilton

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2
Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to actions upon veto.

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13
Proposing amendments to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to the appointment of state judges by the governor.

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SJR 2

SHORT TITLE: CONST. AM: VOTES NEEDED FOR VETO OVERRIDE

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) CLAMAN

01/22/25	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(S)	STA, FIN
01/20/26	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

CARLY DENNIS, Staff
Senator Matt Claman
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided the sectional analysis for SJR 2.

LAURA CAPELLE, President
NEA-Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SJR 2.

CAROLINE STORM, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 2.

THERESA NANGLE OBERMEYER, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 2.

THERESE LEWANDOWSKI, representing self
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 2.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:44 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, Gray-Jackson, Tilton and Chair Kawasaki.

SJR 2-CONST. AM: VOTES NEEDED FOR VETO OVERRIDE

[3:31:48 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the consideration of SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2 Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Alaska relating to actions upon veto.

[3:32:14 PM](#)

SENATOR MATT CLAMAN, District H, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SJR 2 introduced the following legislation:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Senate Joint Resolution 2 makes an important change to our state Constitution to improve our public's ability to influence executive and legislative decisions on revenue and appropriations matters. It would amend Article II, Section 16 of our Constitution to lower the override requirements for revenue and appropriations vetoes from three-fourths of the

legislature sitting in Joint Session, or 45 votes, to two-thirds, or 40 votes.

Alaska has the highest requirements for overriding a revenue or appropriations veto of any state. Only one other state - Arizona - comes close to this high override standard. Arizona shares the three-quarters override vote requirement for a vetoed revenue bill, but Arizona requires only two-thirds of the legislators to override an appropriations item.

[3:33:11 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN continued with the introduction of SJR 2:

The other 48 states all have lower override requirements for revenue and appropriation bills. Most states require a two-thirds vote from both legislative chambers to override a gubernatorial veto. Seven states require a three-fifths vote, and six states only require a simple majority. Few states differentiate between vetoed revenue and appropriations items and typical policy bills.

The three-quarters vote requirement makes it extremely difficult for the Legislature to override a revenue or appropriations veto. In the past two decades, the Legislature has only twice overrode an appropriations veto. And many legislators are familiar with the public's frustration over the protracted efforts to override the Governor's vetoes of public education funding. This summer, Data for Progress conducted a poll of Alaskans that showed strong support for this amendment.

The three-quarters requirement also creates a difficult double-standard for revenue and appropriations legislation to pass the Governor. A typical policy bill, although it might contain a fiscal note, requires a 2/3 vote to override if it receives a governor's veto. If that override vote succeeds, the Governor may then use his line-item veto to remove funding for the bill from the budget. That line-item veto then requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote to pass. We saw this dynamic unfold when the Governor vetoed House Bill 57 last May. The Legislature overrode that veto. And then the Governor vetoed the HB 57 education funding from the budget. Lowering the revenue and appropriations requirement to two-thirds will align

the requirements for all vetoed legislation and eliminate this loophole.

In crafting our constitution, Alaska's framers established a strong governor form of government. This structure is evident when looking at the three-quarters legislative vote requirement to override fiscal legislation. When Alaska was a young state, the idea of a strong governor made sense. Today, we are no longer a young state, our economy has grown, and public participation in the political process has increased. This amendment returns more power to all Alaskans and their elected representatives and senators.

If two-thirds of the House and Senate both approve SJR 2, it will appear on the general election ballot for voters in November. It is not subject to a governor's veto.

[3:35:52 PM](#)

CARLY DENNIS, Staff, Senator Matt Claman, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, provided the sectional analysis for SJR 2.

[Original punctuation provided.]

Section 1

The Constitution of the State of Alaska. Article II, Section 16. Deletes the three-fourth vote requirement for the legislature to override vetoes for revenue and appropriation bills or items. Changes the vote requirement for the legislature to override vetoes for revenue and appropriation bills or items to a two-third vote.

Section 2

The Constitution of the State of Alaska. Conforms with Article XIII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution and the state election laws to put the amendment proposed by this resolution before registered voters in the State of Alaska at the next general election.

[3:36:20 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked what election would SJR 2 first apply to if passed.

[3:36:28 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN replied it would apply to the November 6, 2026 election.

[3:36:32 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI stated that is the general election.

[3:36:52 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced invited testimony on SJR 2.

[3:37:58 PM](#)

LAURA CAPELLE, President, NEA-Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified by invitation on SJR 2. She argued that the three-quarters vote required to override a gubernatorial budget veto is unreasonably high, weakens representative democracy, and gives excessive power to the executive branch. This threshold has caused repeated instability in Alaska's public education system, creating ongoing uncertainty for school districts, educators, families, and students. She pointed to years of "budgetary whiplash," including the unprecedented 2025 veto of the Base Student Allocation, which nearly resulted in a \$51 million shortfall and was reversed only by an extraordinary, narrow override vote. She said SJR 2 is presented as a necessary correction to align the override threshold with the two-thirds standard used for other legislation, restore balance among branches of government, and provide stable, reliable funding for public education. She suggested stronger safeguards in the budget process to protect education and other essential funding from questionable gubernatorial vetoes and to preserve Alaska's quality of life.

[3:43:33 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI noted that the veto occurred in late August. He asked how the school boards adjusted their plans given that the budget cycle usually takes place in March or April.

[3:43:56 PM](#)

MS. CAPELLE replied that the decision depended on the school board. She said the school boards were forced to guess whether the governor would veto the budget and by how much, leading some districts to preemptively cut positions and issue layoffs, creating wide-ranging uncertainty across districts.

[3:45:02 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI opened public testimony on SJR 2.

[3:45:32 PM](#)

CAROLINE STORM, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SJR 2. She noted that Alaska's high override

threshold limits representative democracy, and emphasized that, despite Alaska having a strong state constitution, this issue reduces its effectiveness.

[3:46:52 PM](#)

THERESA NANGLE OBERMEYER, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SJR 2. She sought verification that her written testimony was received.

CHAIR KAWASAKI replied that the committee received her letters.

[3:51:59 PM](#)

THERESE LEWANDOWSKI, representing self, Homer, Alaska, testified in support of SJR 2. She stated her belief that the resolution should go to voters as a constitutional amendment. She noted widespread concern about excessive executive power.

[3:52:59 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI closed public testimony on SJR 2.

[3:53:23 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SJR 2 in committee.

[3:53:29 PM](#)

At ease.

[3:54:53 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reconvened the meeting.

[3:58:22 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 3:58 p.m.