

SCR

30

(7)

Date Referred: February 21, 1992

FURTHER REFERRALS:

Date of Committee Action: 3/9/92

The STATE AFFAIRS Committee considered:

SCR 30

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 30

SUPPORT OPEN PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Supporting open primary elections.

RECOMMENDATIONS: the same title
be replaced with _____ a new title

have attached amendments(s)

do pass

do not pass

no recommendations

individual recommendations

additional referral to the _____ Committee

ADOPTS: _____ letter of Intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): (Dept) _____

APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Dept/Date) _____

fiscal impact _____

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note _____

zero fiscal note(s) Senate State Affairs

SIGNING DO PASS	DP	OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	DNP	NR	AM
<i>Eugene A. Rubenstein</i>	X				
<i>Tom Meyer</i>	X				
<i>John ...</i>	-				
<i>James ...</i>	-				
<i>Mike Miller</i>	-				
<i>Max ...</i>	-				
<i>David ...</i>	-				

Eugene A. Rubenstein
CHAIRMAN'S SIGNATURE

STATE OF ALASKA
1992 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Bill Version: SCR-30

(S) Publish Date: 2-18-92

Revision Date: _____ Department Affected: NONE
 Title: Open Primary Elections BRU: _____
 Component: _____
 Sponsor: Cotten, Rodey, Eliason et al
 Requestor: Senate State Affairs COMPONENT SERIAL NO.

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EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	<u>0</u>					

CAPITAL	<u>0</u>					
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REVENUE FUND SOURCE:	<u>0</u>					
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FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER FUND SOURCE:						
TOTAL	<u>0</u>					

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

Estimate of current year impact: none

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)

Prepared By: M. Gifford, Committee Aide Phone: x4522
 Division: Senate State Affairs Committee Date: 2/14/92
 Approved by Senator PAT RODEY *Pat Rodey*
 Agency: Chair, State Affairs Committee Date: 2/14/92

FISCAL Note

NEWS RELEASE

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WALTER J. HICKEL
GOVERNOR



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FOR RELEASE: February 19, 1992
No. 92-027

STATEMENT BY GOVERNOR WALTER J. HICKEL REGARDING THE OPEN PRIMARY

"Alaska's open primary is a system that has served us well for 25 years. My position on it is crystal clear.

"We had closed primaries in 1966, and I campaigned to open them up to all Alaskan voters.

"When I was Governor 25 years ago, the first bill I signed into law was the open primary. I believe it is still the most fair way to treat those 58 percent of the voters who choose not to affiliate with a political party.

"I want Alaska to continue to have an open primary, and I will work to have one that is consistent with the state and federal constitutions.

"A recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling has prompted the present controversy by saying that political parties can change the rules. How this will impact Alaska's open primary and what changes will be required of our election laws are questions that must be answered.

"The people of Alaska deserve an answer, and as soon as possible in this election year. Therefore, I am directing my Attorney General, Charlie Cole, to immediately research the legal issues to try and protect our open primary system.

"The open primary was a battle hard won 25 years ago. We are going to do everything we can to keep it as open as possible."

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JUNEAU EMPIRE

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TUESDAY,
 FEBRUARY 18, 1992

Alaska's primary works just fine

Editor's Note: This is the first of two editorials about potential changes in Alaska's election process.

Pretend you're getting ready to vote in August's statewide primary election. Pretend the people at your polling place ask which political party you're registered with, if any. Now pretend they give you a ballot printed with the names of just some of the candidates. Or better yet, only one. You vote for candidates from one party. Now quit pretending, because there's a very real possibility that's what will happen next time you go to the polls in Alaska. It isn't a new concept. Forty-seven other states hold primary elections using a process identical or similar to what's described above.

Only Louisiana, Washington and Alaska use versions of the so-called "blanket primary" system that lists all candidates on the same ballot and allows voters to choose whomever they want, mixing and matching regardless of party affiliation.

That freedom has been a hallmark of Alaska's election process. Freewheeling give everybody a chance to be elected.

But now, armed with a 1986 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in a Connecticut election dispute, the Republican Party of Alaska has decided it wants to run a "closed primary." Under the plan, recently affirmed by state GOP leaders, only registered Republicans or those with no party affiliation will be allowed to vote in the primary for Republican candidates.

The GOP central committee is trying to strengthen party allegiance — in a state where party labels never have meant much. Of the 285,219 people who were registered to vote in the last statewide election, 161,743 had chosen no party affiliation. The Democrat and Republican parties each claimed between 55,000 and 60,000 registered voters.

The Democrats and the other parties have responded to the GOP in a variety of ways, but the most frightening and confusing would be four separate primary ballots — one for Republicans, one for Democrats, one for the Independence Party and one for the Alaska Party. Voters would have to choose between the parties, and

ISSUE: State GOP wants closed primary election

separate primary ballots — one for the GOP and one for everybody else. All of which would seem laughable, if it weren't so close to becoming reality.

Sure, there's a chance state GOP leaders will change their minds at the upcoming statewide convention. And the Legislature is expected this week to step up the pace on bills upholding a wide-open primary system. But state attorneys have interpreted the decision to mean political parties have the right to decide how their primary elections are run. Unless they relent, Alaska voters apparently will say goodbye to the wide-open primaries of the past.

That would be a shame, because trying to make political parties stronger in Alaska doesn't mean Alaska will be stronger politically.

It's already hard enough to get people to the polls. To confuse and confound the process is to guarantee more apathy. And that doesn't serve anyone well.

There's also something very appealing — and very Alaskan — about a simple election process that lets voters pick and choose. Why, for instance, shouldn't we be allowed to vote in the primary for a Republican for governor, a Democrat for state Senate and a third-party candidate for the House? To limit voters' choices in any way removes some of the voting-booth freedoms we currently enjoy.

