

HB

257

HFIN

FILE

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(11)

Date Referred to Committee: April 22, 1998

FURTHER REFERRALS:

Date of Committee Action: 5/6/98

The FINANCE Committee considered:

HB 257

HOUSE BILL NO. 257

VOTING & ELECTIONS

“An Act relating to voter qualification, disqualification, and registration; to voter registration officials; to election notices; to mail elections; to certain voting procedures; to the transportation of ballots; and to the official election pamphlet and certain immunity from liability regarding claims arising from publication of the official election pamphlet.”

recommends it be replaced with the following committee substitute CS HB 257 (Fin) the same title a new title

additional referral to _____ Committee
 attached amendment(s)

ADOPTS: _____ Letter of Intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): (Dept) _____ APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Dept/Date) _____
 fiscal note(s) DCED fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) _____ zero fiscal note(s) _____

SIGNING WITH RECOMMENDATIONS	DP	DNP	NR	AM
<i>Gary Thernlund</i>			X	
<i>Ed Held</i>	X			
<i>Ben Simonson</i>	X			
<i>W. Scott E. ...</i>	X			
<i>Robert ...</i>	X			
<i>John ...</i>	X			

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE *Gary Thernlund*

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1998 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CS HB257(FIN)

Revision Date (5/5/98	Dept. Affected	Office of the Governor
Title <u>An Act relating to elections, to voter registration</u>	BRU	Elective Operations
and to candidates for election	Component	Elections
Sponsor <u>Rules Committee</u>		
Requester <u>House Finance Committee</u>	Component Serial No.	<u>#21</u>

Expenditures/Revenues

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
Personal Services	56.7	22.7	22.7	22.7	22.7	22.7
Travel						
Contractual	206.9	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.1
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	263.6	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
-----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

FUND SOURCE

(Thousands of Dollars)

FUND SOURCE	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF	263.6	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type)						
TOTAL	263.6	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8

Estimate of any current year (FY98) cost: none

POSITIONS

POSITIONS	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary	5					

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This fiscal note assumes that registered voters who have not had contact with the division of elections in the preceding two calendar years will be sent an address update/confirmation card. Voter contact includes having voter history in the preceding two calendar years, signing an initiative petition making changes to a voter registration record, requesting an absentee ballot or responding to notices sent by the division.

The fiscal note shows \$56.7 in personal services, anticipating the need for 5 temporary employees (range 8A) for 5 months. An employee can process 150 registrations a day. Temporary employees will also process over 200,000 microfilmed records. The fiscal note shows \$206.9 in contractual costs primarily for printing the required notices and postage costs. The NVRA requires that the division bear the cost of all postage.

Prepared by <u>Dana LaTour</u> <i>Dana LaTour</i>	Phone <u>465-5347</u>
Division <u>Division of Elections</u>	Date <u>5/6/98</u>
Approved by <u>C. Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer</u> <i>Fran Ulmer</i>	Date <u>5/6/98</u>
Agency <u>Office of the Lieutenant Governor</u>	

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DRAFT

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1998 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CS HB257 ()

Revision Date (5/5/98) _____ Dept. Affected Office of the Governor
 Title An Act relating to elections, to voter registration BRU Elective Operations
and to candidates for election Component Elections
 Sponsor Rules Committee
 Requester House Finance Committee Component Serial No. #21

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
Personal Services	56.7	22.7	22.7	22.7	22.7	22.7
Travel						
Contractual	206.9	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.1
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	263.6	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF	263.6	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type)						
TOTAL	263.6	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8

Estimate of any current year (FY98) cost: none

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary	5					

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This fiscal note assumes that registered voters who have not had contact with the division of elections in the preceding two calendar years will be sent an address update/confirmation card. Voter contact includes having voter history in the preceding two calendar years, signing an initiative petition, making changes to a voter registration record, requesting an absentee ballot or responding to notices sent by the division.

The fiscal note shows \$56.7 in personal services, anticipating the need for 5 temporary employees (range 8A) for 5 months. An employee can process 150 registrations a day. Temporary employees will also process over 200,000 microfilmed records. The fiscal note shows \$206.9 in contractual costs primarily for printing the required notices and postage costs. The NVRA requires that the division bear the cost of all postage.

Prepared by Gail Fenwick *G. Fenwick* Phone 465-3935
 Division Division of Elections Date 5/5/98
 Approved by C. Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer Date 5/5/98
 Agency Office of the Lieutenant Governor

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FISCAL NOTE

No: 2

Bill Version: CSHB 257 (STA)

(H) Publish Date: 4/22/98

STATE OF ALASKA
1998 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Revision Date (4/6/98) Dept. Affected Office of the Governor
 Title An Act relating to voter qualification BRU Elective Operations
 Component Elections
 Sponsor Rules Committee
 Requester House State Affairs Committee Component Serial No. #21

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual	(5.8)					
Supplies	(4.0)					
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	(9.8)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

FUND SOURCE	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF	(9.8)					
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type)						
TOTAL	(9.8)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY98) cost: none

POSITIONS

POSITIONS	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary	8					

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

The cost savings reflected above are the reduced costs of conducting a portion of the REAA/CRSA elections by mail. The savings consist of fewer election board worker payments, polling place rentals, and precinct supplies. Some of the savings in these areas are offset by an increase in the cost of absentee review boards and counting teams. The next largest expense is the postal fees associated with mailing ballots to voters. The net result of conducting the elections is a savings of \$9.8. The other benefit of by-mail elections is the potential of a higher voter turnout.

Prepared by Dana LaTour *Dana LaTour* Phone 465-5347
 Division Division of Elections Date 4/6/98
 Approved by C. Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer *Fran Ulmer* Date 4/6/98
 Agency Office of the Lieutenant Governor

PREPARER TO PROVIDE ALL DISTRIBUTION COPIES TO GOVERNOR'S LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

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COMMITTEE COPY

0-GH0095VL
Glover
5/4/98

Adopted
5/4/98

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 257()

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTIETH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY

Offered:
Referred:

Sponsor(s): HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to elections, to voter registration, and to candidates for election;
2 and providing for an effective date."

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

4 * Section 1. AS 15.07.130(a) is amended to read:

5 (a) Periodically, at times of the director's choosing, but no less frequently
6 than in January [AT THE CLOSE] of each calendar year, the director [AREA
7 ELECTION SUPERVISOR] shall examine the master register maintained [BY THE
8 SUPERVISOR] under AS 15.07.120 and shall send, by nonforwardable mail to the
9 voter's registration mailing address, a notice requesting address confirmation or
10 correction to each voter

11 (1) whose mail from the division has been returned to the division
12 in the two years immediately preceding the examination of the register;

13 (2) who has not contacted the division in the two years immediately
14 preceding the examination of the register; or

1 **(3) who has not voted or appeared to vote in the two general**
2 **elections immediately preceding the examination of the register.**

3 * Sec. 2. AS 15.07.130(b) is amended to read:

4 (b) **If** [WHEN] a registered voter has not, [INDICATED IN WRITING A
5 **DESIRE TO REMAIN REGISTERED**] within the preceding four calendar years,
6 **contacted the division** and has neither voted nor appeared to vote in a local, regional
7 school board, primary, special, or general election during the last four calendar years
8 **and a notice sent to the voter under (a) of this section was returned as**
9 **undeliverable**, the voter shall be advised by a notice sent by forwardable mail to the
10 voter's last known address that registration will be inactivated unless the voter responds
11 to the notice **no later than 45** [AT LEAST 30] days **after** [BEFORE] the date of the
12 **notice sent under this section** [NEXT PRIMARY ELECTION ON A FORM
13 FURNISHED BY THE DIRECTOR]. The director shall maintain on the master
14 register the name of a voter whose registration is inactivated. The director shall cancel
15 a voter's inactive registration **in accordance with the procedures set out in 42 U.S.C.**
16 **1973gg-6 (sec. 8, National Voter Registration Act of 1993)** after the second general
17 election that occurs after the registration becomes inactive if the voter does not **contact**
18 **the division or** vote or appear to vote.

19 * Sec. 3. AS 15.07.130(d) is amended to read:

20 (d) The notice **sent under** [DESCRIBED IN] (b) of this section must include
21 a postage prepaid and pre-addressed return card on which the voter may state the
22 voter's current address. The notice must indicate

23 (1) that the voter should return the card not later than **45 days after the**
24 **date of the notice** [30 DAYS BEFORE THE NEXT PRIMARY ELECTION] if the
25 voter did not change residence:

26 (2) that **failure to** [THE VOTER MAY VOTE ONLY A
27 QUESTIONED OR ABSENTEE BALLOT IF THE VOTER DOES NOT] return the
28 card **by the 45-day deadline could result in removal of the voter's name from the**
29 **official registration list for a subsequent election** [AT LEAST 30 DAYS BEFORE
30 THE NEXT PRIMARY ELECTION];

31 (3) that the voter's registration will be cancelled if the voter does not

1 contact the division during, or vote or appear to vote in an election held during, the
2 period beginning on the date of the notice and ending on the day after the last day of
3 the fourth calendar year that occurs after the date of notice; and

4 (4) how the voter can continue to be eligible to vote if the voter has
5 changed residence.

6 * Sec. 4. AS 15.07.130 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

7 (f) For the purpose of this section, a voter "contacts" the division if the voter
8 notifies the division of a change of address, responds to a notice sent under this
9 section, signs a petition for a ballot measure, requests a new voter registration card,
10 or otherwise communicates with the division other than to vote or register to vote.

11 * Sec. 5. AS 15.15.030 is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

12 (14) Notwithstanding any other provision of this title, the director may
13 provide for voting by use of optically scanned ballots where optical scanning
14 equipment is available.

15 * Sec. 6. AS 15.20.071 is repealed and reenacted to read:

16 **Sec. 15.20.071. Absentee voting by personal representative.** (a) A qualified
17 voter with a disability who, because of that disability, is unable to go to a polling place
18 to vote may vote an absentee ballot through a personal representative.

19 (b) The voter must apply in writing to the following election officials, at the
20 times specified, for an absentee ballot:

21 (1) to an absentee voting official on or after the 15th day before an
22 election, up to and including the day of the election;

23 (2) to an election supervisor

24 (A) after a date announced by the director under
25 AS 15.20.048(b); and

26 (B) on or after the 15th day before an election up to and
27 including the day of the election;

28 (3) to an absentee voting official at an absentee voting station
29 designated under AS 15.20.045(b) at a time when the absentee voting station is in
30 operation; or

31 (4) to a member of the precinct election board on election day.

1 (c) The voter's application must include the following:

2 (1) the name and full residence address of the voter;

3 (2) a form of identification for the voter that meets the requirements
4 established by the director for absentee voting by mail under AS 15.20.081(f);

5 (3) the full name of the personal representative; and

6 (4) the voter's signature or mark.

7 (d) The election official shall issue the ballot and voter's certificate, which
8 includes the date and location from which the ballot was issued, upon

9 (i) receipt of the written application of the voter that meets the
10 requirements of (c) of this section;

11 (2) presentation of identification by the personal representative; and

12 (3) completion by the personal representative of a certification that
13 includes the personal representative's name, residence and mailing addresses, type and
14 number of identification, and signature and the name of the voter on whose behalf the
15 ballot is requested.

16 (e) The personal representative shall deliver the absentee ballot and other
17 absentee voting materials to the voter as soon as practicable. The voter shall proceed
18 to mark the ballot in secret, to place the ballot in the secrecy sleeve, and to place the
19 secrecy sleeve in the envelope provided. On the voter's certificate portion of the
20 envelope, the voter shall state the name of the personal representative who delivered
21 the absentee ballot, shall state that, because of a disability, the voter is unable to go
22 to a polling place to vote, and shall sign the voter's certificate in the presence of the
23 personal representative. The personal representative shall witness and date the
24 signature of the voter. The voter shall return the absentee ballot to the personal
25 representative by a time reasonably calculated to be necessary for the personal
26 representative to deliver the material to an election official before 8:00 p.m. on election
27 day. The personal representative shall

28 (1) deliver the ballot and voter certificate to an election official not
29 later than 8:00 p.m. on election day; and

30 (2) certify on the form requested under (d)(3) of this section the date
31 and time the voter's absentee ballot and certificate were delivered to the election

1 official.

2 (f) Notwithstanding (e) of this section, if a qualified voter's disability
3 precludes the voter from performing any of the requirements of (e) of this section, the
4 personal representative may perform those requirements on the voter's behalf, except
5 the voting decision.

6 (g) The voter's employer, an agent of the voter's employer, or an officer or
7 agent of the voter's union may not act as a personal representative for the voter. A
8 candidate for office at an election may not act as a personal representative for a voter
9 in the election.

10 * Sec. 7. AS 15.20.081(b) is amended to read:

11 (b) An application requesting delivery of an absentee ballot to the applicant
12 by mail must be received by the division of elections not less than seven days before
13 the election for which the absentee ballot is sought. An application for an absentee
14 ballot for a state election from a qualified voter requesting delivery of an absentee
15 ballot to the applicant by electronic transmission must be received by the division of
16 elections not later than 5:00 p.m. Alaska time on the day [LESS THAN FOUR
17 DAYS] before the election for which the absentee ballot is sought. An absentee ballot
18 application submitted by mail under this section must permit the person to register to
19 vote under AS 15.07.070 and to request an absentee ballot for each state election held
20 within that calendar year for which the voter is eligible to vote. An absentee ballot
21 application submitted by electronic transmission under this section may not include a
22 provision that permits a person to register to vote under AS 15.07.070.

23 * Sec. 8. AS 15.20 is amended by adding a new section to read:

24 **Article 6. Optically Scanned Voting.**

25 **Sec. 15.20.900. Optically scanned ballot tabulation.** (a) Notwithstanding
26 any other provisions of this title, the director may adopt regulations that provide
27 procedures for the tabulation of optically scanned ballots, including procedures for

28 (1) tests of the counting programs developed for each precinct tabulator
29 to ensure that the system is functioning properly;

30 (2) security for the voting and tabulation of ballots;

31 (3) the transmission and accumulation of vote totals to assure the

1 integrity of the vote counting process;

2 (4) observation by the public of the counting process in the regional
3 offices; and

4 (5) the disposition of ballots.

5 (b) The state ballot counting review board established under AS 15.10.180
6 shall test the counting programs for the tabulation of optically scanned ballots and
7 certify their accuracy in accordance with the regulations adopted under (a) of this
8 section.

9 * Sec. 9. AS 15.58.020 is amended to read:

10 **Sec. 15.58.020. Contents of pamphlet.** Each election pamphlet must
11 [SHALL] contain

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

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

16 (3) a map of the election district or districts of the region;

17 (4) sample ballots for election districts of the region;

18 (5) an absentee ballot application;

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

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

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

25 (C) a neutral summary of the proposition prepared by the
26 Legislative Affairs Agency;

27 (D) statements submitted which advocate voter approval or
28 rejection of the proposition not to exceed 500 words;

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

31 (8) a maximum of two pages of material submitted by each political

1 party;

2 (9) additional information on voting procedures that the lieutenant
3 governor considers necessary;

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

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

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

9 (11) under AS 37.15.070, the Alaska permanent fund annual income
10 statement and balance sheet for the two fiscal years preceding the publication of
11 the election pamphlet.

12 * Sec. 10. AS 15.58.030(a) is amended to read:

13 (a) No later than August 30 [JULY 15] of a presidential election year,
14 candidates for the offices of the United States President and Vice-President may file
15 with the lieutenant governor photographs and statements advocating their candidacy.

16 * Sec. 11. AS 15.58.030(d) is amended to read:

17 (d) Pages on which candidates' photographs or statements appear must be
18 clearly identified with the words "provided and paid for by the candidate."

19 * Sec. 12. AS 15.58.030(f) is amended to read:

20 (f) A candidate's photograph must be [A] 5" x 7" in size and must have been
21 [BLACK AND WHITE GLOSSY PRINT] taken within the past five years. The
22 photograph must be limited to the head, neck, and shoulders of the candidate.

23 * Sec. 13. This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

Sectional Analysis for CS HB257() WORK DRAFT
Prepared by the Division of Elections
May 5, 1998

Sections 1-4

- ◆ These sections address voter list maintenance. (They were previously considered and approved by Senate State Affairs, Senate Finance and House State Affairs as SB185.) Since the passage of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) in 1993, the division has been unable to purge the voter registration list.
- ◆ This is the state's second attempt to bring state law into compliance with the federal law. In 1996, legislation was passed but the US Department of Justice declared it violated the NVRA and authorized a lawsuit against the state. So far, the Department of Justice has refrained from actually filing the suit while the legislature is considering this corrective legislation.
- ◆ The list maintenance process will work as follows:
 - ◆ Each year a nonforwardable mailing will be sent to voters who, in the two years preceding, have had mail returned to the division; have not contacted the division; and have not voted or appeared to vote.
 - ◆ A second notice will be sent to those voters whose cards are returned by the US Postal Service as undeliverable or with a new forwarding address.
 - ◆ Voters have 45 days to respond to the second mailing. If no response is received, the voter will be placed on an inactive list.
 - ◆ If no there is voter contact during the following four years, the voter will be removed from the registration list.
- ◆ When a voter is placed on the inactive list, their name no longer appears on precinct registers or any list prepared by the division. A voter may become active at any time during that four year period by making contact with the division.

Section 5 and 8

- ◆ Provides statutory authority for the division to conduct elections using optical scanning ballot tabulation equipment. Explicit statutory authority assures that adoption of the optical scanning method does not create any legal difficulties.
- ◆ Gives authority to the director to adopt regulations outlining procedures for the tabulation of optically scanned ballots.

Section 6

- ◆ Improves the absentee by personal representative process. It provides better accountability by requiring the personal representative to provide identification and sign a register before being issued ballots.

- ◆ Streamlining the process by decreasing the number of trips the personal representative is required to make. It would also decrease the number of signatures required. In 1996, there were 513 absentee by personal representative ballots. Of those, 15 percent were rejected for insufficient witnessing and signatures.
- ◆ Although the process has been simplified, additional security measures have been added. This important protection will reduce the possibility of voter fraud.

Section 7

- ◆ After implementing absentee voting by fax in 1996, the division quickly realized how valuable a tool it was for voters not receiving ballots in time. However, because the application period ended four days before an election, many could not be served by the process.
- ◆ This section extends the application deadline for absentee voting by fax to the day before an election. The current deadline is four days prior to an election.

Sections 9-13

- ◆ These sections make only technical changes associated with the official election pamphlet.



FRAN ULMER
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
STATE OF ALASKA

May 4, 1998

The Honorable Gene Therriault
Co-Chair, House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 515
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Therriault:

Currently two important election bills, SB185 and HB 257 are in the House Finance Committee waiting to be scheduled. It is crucial to the Division of Elections, that these bills be passed this legislative session. I hope that you will schedule them quickly.

Senate Bill 185, an act relating to list maintenance, will bring the state's election law into compliance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). Since the NVRA was passed in 1993 the division has not been able to remove inactive voters from the registration rolls. The NVRA prohibits targeting voters solely for non-voting. In 1996, legislation was passed in an attempt to bring the state into federal compliance. However, the US Department of Justice believes the legislation violated the NVRA and authorized a lawsuit to be filed against the State of Alaska.

Senate Bill 185 is crucial for several reasons. First, its passage will avoid a lawsuit with the federal government. Second, public confidence in the accuracy of the voter list will increase. Currently the voter list is overinflated and that, in turn, understates voter turnout. Finally, over time there will be cost savings to candidates, political groups, members of the public and the state because the list will be more accurate and inactive voters will be purged.

House Bill 257, an act relating to voter qualification, disqualification, and registration; relating to voter registration officials and election personnel; relating to election notices; relating to mail elections; relating to certain election procedures; relating to the transportation of ballots; and relating to the official election pamphlet, contains a number of important provisions. As you are aware, the division is purchasing a new ballot tabulation system. This bill gives the division statutory authority to conduct elections using optical scanning ballot tabulation equipment. Without statutory authority, an election conducted using this technology may be subject to legal challenge.

Representative Gene Therriault
May 4, 1998
Page 2

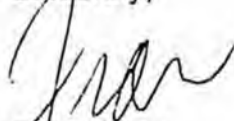
Secondly, HB 257 expands the opportunity for voters to vote absentee by fax. Presently the application deadline for absentee by fax voting is four days prior to an election. This bill will change the application deadline to the day before an election. The division believes this will provide additional opportunity to voters who unexpectedly find themselves unable to vote in person.

Third, the bill improves the absentee by personal representative voting process. The process has been simplified. It also adds additional security measures on the part of the personal representative. For the first time, the personal representative will be required to provide identification and sign a register before ballots will be issued. This important protection will reduce the possibility of voter fraud.

The last major provision deals with exempting election workers who make less than \$1,000 per calendar year from federal unemployment tax. This provision is a result of the Federal Balanced Budget Act of 1997. The state must adopt this provision in order to take advantage of the new federal law.

I would sincerely appreciate your assistance in expediting these two important bills. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Fran Ulmer
Lieutenant Governor

TONY KNOWLES
GOVERNOR



STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

HB 257
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001
(907) 465-3500
Fax (907) 466-3532

April 18, 1997

The Honorable Gail Phillips
Speaker of the House
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Speaker *Gail* Phillips:

This bill I am transmitting amends the state election code to instill higher voter confidence in the election process and provide greater voter access to ensure maximum turnout at the polls.

This legislation proposes to change the election process in Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAA) and Coastal Resource Service Areas (CRSA) by conducting elections through the mail. This is expected to increase voter turnout, which has historically been low in these areas. In 1996, average turnout for REAA elections was 35 percent; for CRSA it was 40 percent. Under this bill, the Division of Elections will mail a ballot to all eligible voters in these areas about three weeks prior to the election.

In the 1996 general election, 513 voters participated in the electoral process through absentee voting by personal representative. Fifteen percent of these voters' ballots were rejected. This legislation will make the process less time consuming, less confusing and provide for better accountability.

In an attempt to increase voter participation and voter access, this legislation proposes extending the application deadline for absentee voting by fax to the day before an election. Current law requires the application to be received four days before an election. This change would expand the opportunity to voters who find themselves in extenuating circumstances.


The Honorable Gail Phillips
April 18, 1997
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The legislation also proposes to change the name of the "questioned ballot" to "special review ballot." Many voters have expressed concern and confusion over the term "questioned." This new name more accurately reflects the true intent of the ballot.

Other sections of the bill make technical changes to the election code regarding the official election pamphlet, public notice of elections, and transportation of ballots. Division of Elections staff will be available during the committee process on this bill to offer its full explanation and analysis.

I urge your prompt consideration and passage of this bill.

Sincerely,



Tony Knowles
Governor