

HB

95

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Representative Chris Tuck

House Minority Leader

Alaska State Legislature

District 23 - Representing Dimond Estates, Foxridge, Taku,
Campbell, Northwood and Windemere

MEMORANDUM

February 11, 2015

TO: Representative Bob Lynn
Chair, State Affairs Committee

FROM: Rep. Chris Tuck
House Minority Leader

SUBJ: Hearing Request for House Bill 95

Reg 2/11/15

CT

I am writing to request a hearing for House Bill 95: Election Registration and Voting.

This legislation would provide same day voter registration to allow all eligible Alaskans the opportunity to vote, enhance online voter registration with electronic signatures to make the registration process quicker and easier, ensure the same early voting locations are available during every election, create an option for permanent absentee voting for individuals that plan to vote by mail every year, and clarify terminology for early voting to remove confusion between early voting and absentee in-person voting.

Included in the bill packet:

- House Bill 95, Version H
- Sectional Analysis
- Sponsor Statement
- Support Letters
- Fact Sheet

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me or my staff Kendra Kloster at 465-3579.

Thank you for your consideration.

(Handwritten signature/initials)



Representative Chris Tuck

House Minority Leader

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Campbell, Northwood and Windemere

Sponsor Statement House Bill 95 Election Registration and Voting

The right to vote embodies the spirit of American democracy. Casting a vote is the most discretely effective way to have one's voice heard in the political process. When we exercise our right to vote we impact our community far beyond an election: we are able to elect individuals who will make decisions on our behalf about how our government will be run, set the policies that will guide our state, and how resources, both national and local, are distributed.

Unfortunately, a surprising number of Americans don't exercise their right to vote. On average, only about half of eligible US voters cast ballots. Although, Alaska is one of a handful of states which exceeded 50 percent voter turnout in 2014, almost half of Alaskan voters are effectively not being heard.

House Bill 95 includes a series of changes designed to increase voter participation and access to voting across the state by improving and clarifying the voting process. These changes include:

- Providing same day voter registration to allow all eligible Alaskans the opportunity to vote;
- Enhancing online voter registration with electronic signatures to make the registration process quicker and easier;
- Ensuring the same early voting locations are available during every election;
- Creating an option for permanent absentee voting for individuals that plan to vote by mail every year; and
- Clarifying and unifying terminology for early voting to remove confusion between early voting and absentee in-person voting.

By adopting the changes in House Bill 95, we can take a step forward to increase the voice of all Alaskans.

LEGAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF LEGAL AND RESEARCH SERVICES
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY
STATE OF ALASKA

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Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
Deliveries to: 129 6th St., Rm. 329

MEMORANDUM

February 5, 2015

SUBJECT: Sectional Summary for Work Order No. 29-LS0052\H

TO: Representative Chris Tuck
Attn: Kendra Kloster

FROM: Alpheus Bullard *ALB*
Legislative Counsel

You have requested a sectional summary of the above-described bill draft. As a preliminary matter, please note that a sectional summary of a bill should not be considered an authoritative interpretation of the bill -- the bill itself is the best statement of its contents.

Section 1. Removes language from AS 15.05.010 that requires a qualified voter to register under AS 15.07 before an election.

Section 2. Permits a person registering or reregistering as a voter to apply using an electronic signature.

Section 3. Allows a qualified voter registering on the day of, or within 30 days of an election, to vote a questioned ballot at that election.

Section 4. Conforms AS 15.07.130(e) to changes made in sec. 5 of the bill.

Section 5. Renames absentee voting stations "early voting stations." Provides that a location designated as an early voting station will remain an early voting station for subsequent elections unless the location is no longer available for use or the director of the division of elections determines that the location is no longer appropriate. Requires the director to make a determination that a location is no longer appropriate for use as an early voting station available to the public in writing.

Sections 6 - 8. Conform AS 15.20.050, AS 15.20.061(a), and AS 15.20.072(b) to changes made in sec. 5 of the bill.

Section 9. Requires an absentee ballot application to include an option for a voter to chose to receive absentee ballots by mail for future regularly scheduled state elections. Provides conditions under which the director may require a voter to reapply to receive absentee ballots by mail.

Representative Chris Tuck
February 5, 2015
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Section 10. Defines "electronic signature" for AS 15.

Section 11. Conforms AS 29.20.380(c) to changes made in sec. 5 of the bill.

Section 12. Provides authority to the director of the division of elections in uncodified law to adopt or amend regulations as necessary to implement the changes made by the Act.

Section 13. Provides an effective date for the bill's provisions.

TLAB:dla
15-049.dla

Election Fact Sheet

Unfortunately, a surprising number of Americans don't exercise their right to vote. On average, about half of eligible US voters cast ballots.¹

Although, Alaska is one of a handful of states which exceeded the 2014 National average for voter turnout in 2014 with 55%, almost half of Alaskan voters are effectively not being heard.

According to a Global report on Voter Turnout Rates the United States ranks 120th worldwide.²

Average Voter Turnout in Alaska (2014) – 55.5%³

Alaska Native Average Voter Turnout (2014) - 52.9%⁴

Nationally, the overall voter turnout in 2014 was 36.3%, only the 1942 federal election had a lower participation rate at 33.9%.⁵

Voter participation varies significantly depending on the location⁶:

- 11 rural Alaska Native villages were under 30% voter turnout in 2014⁷
- 13 rural Alaska Native villages were above 60% voter turnout in 2014⁸
- JBER and Northeast Anchorage (District 15) – 37% voter turnout in 2014
- South Anchorage, Indian & Girdwood (District 28) – 70% voter turnout in 2014

National Voting Statistics⁹:

- Only 13% of voters were under 30
- Nearly half of nonvoters (46%) have family incomes less than \$30,000, compared with 19% of likely voters.
- Most nonvoters (54%) have not attended college, while 72% of likely voters have completed at least some college.
- Nonvoters are more racially and ethnically diverse: 43% of those who are not likely to cast ballots are Hispanic, African American or other racial and ethnic minorities.

¹ United States Election Project

² Voter Turnout Rates from a Comparative Perspective by Rafael Lopez Pintor, Maria Gatschew and Kate Sullivan. <http://www.idea.int/publications/vt/upload/Voter%20turnout.pdf>

³ United States Election Project. Also see article in Washington Post, Best state in America: Maine, for voter turnout

⁴ Data provided by First Alaskans Institute

⁵ United States Election Project at George Mason University. Also see New York Times article, The Worst Voter Turnout in 72 years

⁶ Alaska Division of Elections and First Alaskans Institute.

⁷ Villages include: Tyonek, Tatitlek, Nondalton, Egegik, Kodiak Island South, Chignik, Sleetmute, Upper Kalskag, Stevens Village, Koliganek, Ewok

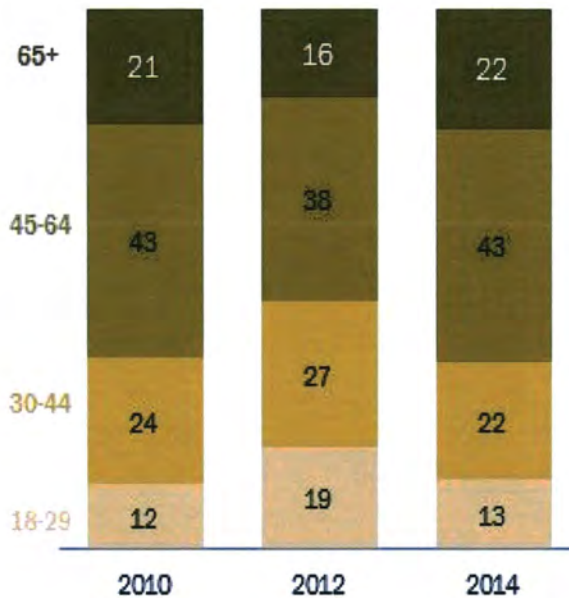
⁸ Villages include: Allakaket, Anvik, Koyukuk, Chefornak, Hughes, Kaltak, Shaktoolik, Russian Mission, Shishmaref, Tuluksak, Huslia, Nikolai, Wales

⁹ PEW Research Study. Also see articles The Party of Nonvoters and Midterm Turnout Down in 2014

Election Fact Sheet

2014: An Older Electorate

% of voters who are...

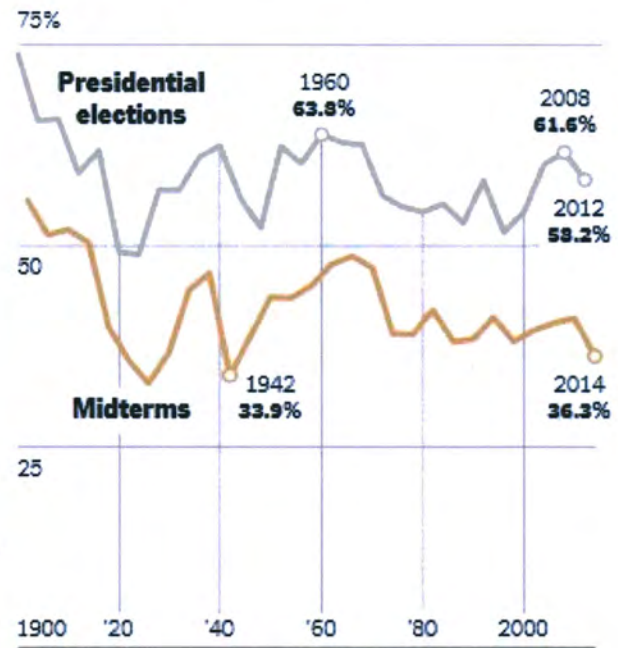


Exit poll conducted by Edison Research for the National Election Pool, as reported by NBC News.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

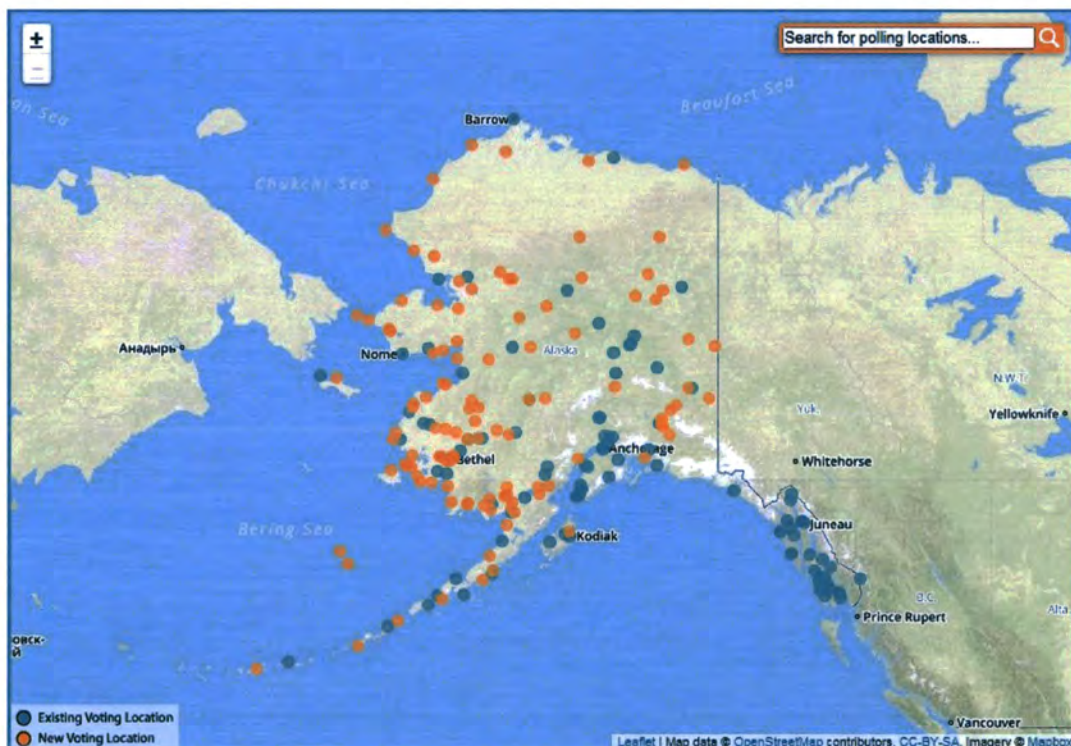
Poor Participation in Democracy

Turnout this month was the lowest in any federal election since 1942.



Source: United States Elections Project, University of Florida

To increase voting access across the state, particularly in rural areas, the Alaska Federation of Natives, ANCSA Regional Association, Get Out the Native Vote and numerous Native Corporations worked with communities to set up 128 new early voting locations in 2014.



Election Fact Sheet

Contributing Factors to High Voter Turnout

Wisconsin, Maine and Minnesota, who have higher than average voter turnout, attributes their success to allowing new voters to register and vote on Election Day. Same-day registration is the biggest factor in generating high voter turnout as it generates a possible voter increase of 10 percent.¹⁰

Competitive gubernatorial races have also contributed to higher voter turnout, including Alaska in the 2012 election.

Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie attributes the state's consistently high rating to state policies and an emphasis on reducing barriers to voting access. The most effective policy is same-day registration, Ritchie says. Election officials also go to high school civics classes or assemblies, and they bring voting machines to the state fair to show people how easy it is to vote.¹¹

Barriers to Equal Voting Rights in Alaska

Not all communities in Alaska have an early voting location.

Hospitals should also be included as early voting sites as many individuals travel from rural areas to receive medical care and are unable to be transported outside the hospital to vote.

Language barriers: *Toyukak v. Treadwell* case demonstrated the state was not adequately providing language assistance according to the Voting Rights Act.

Insufficient training for early voting officials.

Requirement to register to vote 30 days before election.

¹⁰ Eric Ostermeier with the University of Minnesota

¹¹ Project Vote. Voter Turnout: the 6 states that rank highest, and why by Allison Terry

ALASKA NATIVE TURNOUT

In 2012

57% turnout

Compared to non-Native turnout at 59%

Young population

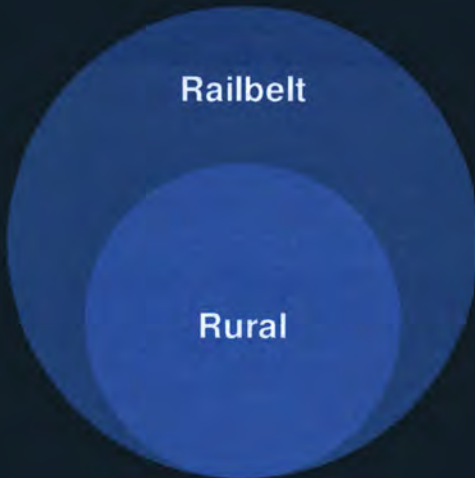
71%

Are born after 1971

49%

Are under 25

Where Alaska Natives Voters are



Natives are in



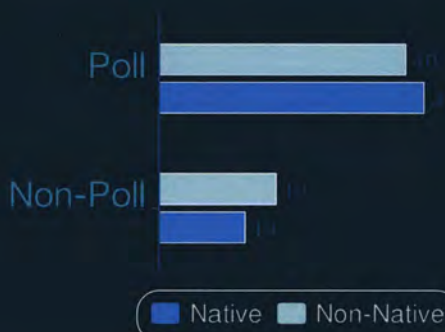
Voting Age Alaska Natives

88,353



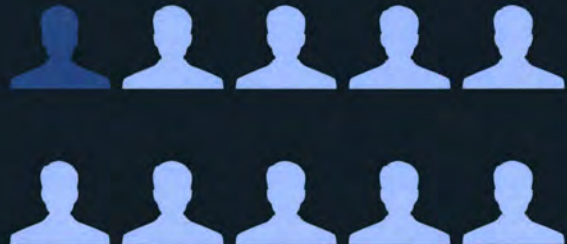
approx one in five voters

Turnout breakdown



non-poll is absentee and early voting

Registered voters



90% of Alaska Natives are registered to vote, compared with 96% of other Alaskan residents.

extrapolated from Native villages of 80% or greater and registration numbers from Oct 2012

What if we turn out at 90% ✓



Mathematically, it is possible to take 13 House districts and six Senate seats, getting us closer to equitable representation.

Native vote questions? Contact the Alaska Native Policy Center at First Alaskans Institute:
anpc@firstalaskans.org or call (907) 677-1700.

Native Vote 2014

Why Vote

A common Native refrain is "to love and help your people." Voting- even if you don't believe in the system- is one way you can help.

Programs and services vital to you , your family, your community and your people depend on you to keep them effective, authorized and funded.

Millions of dollars rightfully committed to Alaska Native organizations and peoples get approved by local, state and federal legislative bodies, made up of the people we elect.



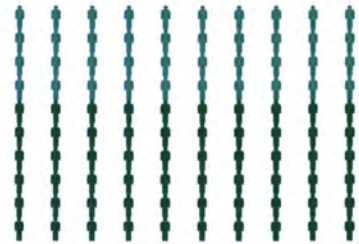
Programs like...

Indian Health Service, Medicaid/ Medicare/ Denali Kidcare, food programs, Housing, Schools and Education programs, Job training programs, SBA loans, 8 (a) program, Roads, transportation programs and Veterans programs



Your community depends on you

**Subsistence laws
Education Laws
Economic Development**



Right now, Alaska Natives are voting like we are playing a 5-on-5 basketball game with only 2.5 players

These all depend on the input of voters

YOU CONTROL YOUR VOTE

You can request an absentee or early voting ballot by going to the division of elections website: www.elections.alaska.gov or call: 1(866) 948-8683

Employers cannot disallow you to vote

Alaska Code § 15.15.100 states: employees without sufficient time to vote may take off as much time, with pay, as needed to enable voting, unless there are two hours between the opening of the polls and the beginning of their normal working hours or two hours between the closing of the polls and the end of their normal working hours.

