



Secure Democracy
USA

S.B. 64 Will Strengthen Security, Voter Freedom, and Confidence in Alaska's Elections

January 30, 2025

Dear Chairman Kawasaki and esteemed members of the Senate State Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 64. My name is Peter Skopec, and I am the Director of Advocacy for Secure Democracy USA. We are a national, nonpartisan nonprofit that works with state leaders, election administrators, and policy experts to strengthen election security and modernize election administration, with a goal of building greater confidence in our elections.

We believe strengthening election security and improving voter access are not mutually exclusive goals; rather, both are necessary to preserve and build public trust in our elections. Since 2022, we have worked with members of this committee and your colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pursue these shared goals in order to make it easy for eligible Alaskans to vote – and hard to cheat.

S.B. 64 is a strong package of commonsense proposals, built on years of bipartisan efforts to strengthen election administration in Alaska. We applaud this committee for taking up this important bill, which would improve voters' trust and confidence in future elections. We are happy to register our support.

S.B. 64 contains important provisions that strengthen election security, transparency, and accountability. As drafted, this bill would:

- **Update Alaska's voter list maintenance practices** to improve voter roll accuracy.
- **Improve absentee ballot processing and ballot tracking**, to speed up results reporting and allow voters to follow the progress of their ballot through the counting process.
- **Create a uniform statewide cure process** for absentee ballots, adding an important procedural layer of voter verification to bolster security and confidence.
- **Eliminate Alaska's burdensome and ineffective witness requirement** and replace it with signature verification.
- **Modernize voter registration and absentee voting** to allow eligible Alaskans to vote more securely and confidently.

Every eligible voter should have the freedom to cast their ballot securely and conveniently, the confidence in knowing their vote was counted, and the certainty that reported election results are accurate and trustworthy. S.B. 64 brings Alaska's election system in line with several best practices for election security, transparency, and integrity, as outlined below.

Updating voter list maintenance practices

Maintaining accurate, up-to-date voter registration lists is critical to administering smooth and secure elections. S.B. 64 would improve voter roll accuracy, including by removing "intent to return" from voters' residency determination and creating a process through which voters may cancel their registration.

Improving absentee ballot processing, ballot tracking, and results reporting

S.B. 64 would require the secure counting of reviewed and eligible absentee ballots to begin at least seven days before Election Day, which would help ensure faster results and provide officials with greater flexibility on Election Day.

S.B. 64 would also enhance transparency and voter confidence by establishing an online, mobile-friendly ballot tracking system. This system would allow voters to confirm that the Division of Elections mailed their absentee ballot, track its delivery, and confirm that the completed ballot was returned and counted.

Creating a uniform statewide cure process

Cure processes allow elections officials to contact voters to correct common, honest mistakes on their absentee ballot certificates, such as a missing signature. A strong cure process enables election officials who are uncertain about a ballot's validity to directly contact the voter to verify their identity and confirm they cast the ballot in question. This process adds another layer of security to protect against or identify any cases of fraud or illegal voting.

In total, 32 states across the political spectrum – including large western and rural states like Montana, Utah, and North Dakota – notify and give voters the opportunity to cure ballots with minor mistakes.

Eliminating Alaska's burdensome and ineffective witness requirement

Under S.B. 64, the Division of Elections would verify absentee ballots by matching a voter's signature to the signature in their voter registration file – the most common way to verify absentee ballots nationwide. Thirty-one states use signature matching to verify returned absentee mail ballots, including Florida, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Texas, and Utah.

Current law requires an absentee voter's ballot certificate to be notarized or witnessed. This process is unnecessarily burdensome – particularly for rural and senior voters – compared to

other, equally effective forms of ballot verification. Most states – including many western, rural states with high absentee participation rates – allow voters to return their absentee ballot by providing identifying information, such as a voter’s signature, address, and/or date of birth.

Modernizing the voter registration and absentee voting process

S.B. 64 proposes a number of other improvements that would make the state’s voter list more accurate and allow eligible Alaskans to exercise their freedom to vote with confidence. These changes include: allowing eligible Alaskans to register to vote (or update their existing registrations) through Election Day; creating an absentee voter list that allows voters who prefer to vote by mail or are unable to vote in person to apply once and automatically receive absentee ballots for future elections, without needing to reapply each time; and providing postage-paid return envelopes to absentee voters.

We thank you again for the opportunity to submit this written testimony and respectfully urge you to support S.B. 64. We would be happy to provide the committee with any additional information.

Sincerely,

Peter Skopec

Director of Advocacy

Secure Democracy USA

Secure Democracy USA is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization building stronger elections, state by state. We advocate for practical election policy solutions guided by research and supported across the ideological spectrum.