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## House Bill 66

### *"Elections, Voting, Ballots"*

#### Sponsor Statement

In November of 2020, over 361,000 Alaskans voted. Never in Alaska's history have so many people cast a ballot in an election. This achievement is especially significant because the election occurred during a global pandemic.

House Bill 66 seeks to build on the success of the 2020 election by making permanent some of the temporary changes put in place to ensure Alaskans could vote safely. These changes include eliminating the witness requirement for absentee ballots and a pay increase for election workers.

HB 66 also seeks to modernize elections in Alaska by allowing electronic signatures and same-day voter registration. The bill also requires absentee ballots to be counted as they are received instead of waiting until after the polls close on election day. This will speed up the release of more complete election results.

Other provisions in House Bill 66 include:

- Allowing the use of electronic signatures for voter registration.
- Calling for the same early voting locations to be available during every election.
- Creating an option for permanent absentee voting for individuals that plan to vote by mail in every election.
- Requiring the Division of Elections to provide a postage-paid return envelope with absentee ballots, eliminating the need for stamps to vote.
- Clarifying terminology for early voting to remove confusion between early voting and absentee in-person voting.
- Requiring election officials to notify a voter if their absentee ballot is rejected.

- Requiring the Division of Elections to offer a voter the option to fix a mailed-in absentee ballot if there are errors.
- Eliminating the witness requirement for absentee ballots.
- Increasing the pay for poll workers from \$12 per hour to \$15 per hour.
- Clarifying that candidates and groups sponsoring ballot initiatives can have poll watchers.
- Allowing absentee ballots to be counted as they are received instead of waiting until after the polls close on election day.

The overarching goal behind HB 66 is to remove barriers to the ballot box at every stage of Alaska's elections. HB 66 will make it more convenient to vote before election day and make it easier to vote on election day.

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