



Alaska Libertarian Party

House State Affairs Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Davis Room 106
Juneau, AK 99801

June 30, 2020

Members of the House State Affairs Committee:

The Alaska Libertarian Party (ALP) stands firmly behind the Alaskans for Better Elections ballot initiative. Our current system of elections treats this state as if all 731,000 Alaskans were Republican or Democrat, when less than 40% of the State's voters are registered under these parties. More than 438,000 voters in Alaska are forced to choose between two parties that do not align with their values. It is unreasonable to assume that a such a large and diverse population can be properly represented by just two political parties, just two points of view.

To make matters worse, onerous ballot restrictions put in place by Republicans and Democrats mandate that public funds are allocated every year supporting primaries that compel voters to register under the two old parties. All Alaskans must subsidize these ruling parties, even if they don't belong to them. The open primaries requirement put forth in the Alaskans for Better Elections ballot initiative would mean all voices can be represented, and the public money put forth for those primaries becomes equitable.

To the Dark Money portion of the ballot initiative, the Alaska Libertarian Party holds that any individual or organization should be free to donate whatever amount they desire to whatever candidate or party they desire, as a protected form of free speech. However, we see no harm in adding transparency to the political process by helping voters to know who is bankrolling particular candidates.

The most important part of the initiative, the section that draws Alaska's libertarians and so many others to its support, is ranked choice voting. Under our current system, voters are trapped in an endless cycle of voting for what they consider to be the lesser evil. Voting their conscience or for a candidate they truly prefer is not an option for most, as they are told they are "stealing" votes from one of the two old parties. This causes a forced choice between two undesirable candidates - therefore many choose not to vote at all.



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Ranked choice voting (RCV) is currently used in more than 15 cities, the state of Maine, and many university and organizational elections. The people of Maine not only voted RCV in, but then voted to expand it after seeing it in action. According to the Bangor Daily News, over 70% of voters agreed it was important for a candidate to achieve a true majority of support, which Ranked Choice Voting ensures. A 2016 study by the University of Missouri-St. Louis showed that voter turnout for primaries increased 10 points with ranked choice voting. It brought out more voters because they knew they could cast their vote for who they truly supported, and that their vote would still be counted if their candidate was eliminated later in the process. This ensures that more voices, more points of view, more ideas, and more options are represented in the process. As Libertarians, we support a free market of ideas rather than the current monopolistic control that reduces rather than expands Alaskan's choices.

We look forward to working with elected officials to revive our election process so that it represents each voter. It is the right thing to do for Alaskans we all seek to properly represent.

Jon Briggs Watts
Chair,
Alaska Libertarian Party