

Elections bills - will we finally get one?

Ensuring that all Alaskan voters are heard and their votes counted is critical to maintaining a free and fair democracy. It is time for election reform.

The LWV-AK hosted a zoom “Lunch with the League” last Friday at noon. It is a great opportunity for all league members to hear from legislators and/or their staff on bills that will make a difference to Alaskan voters. We heard about [HB43](#) and [SB64](#) - bills that address important areas such as: prepaid postage for absentee and mail-in ballots, elimination of the witness signature, and establishing a ballot curing process. These are important and very positive bills which we are supporting.

SB 64 removes barriers to voting

Repeals the witness signature requirement for absentee by mail ballots

Stops special needs ballots from being rejected because of mistakes by poll workers or representatives

Creates a ballot curing process

Requires secure ballot drop boxes be made available

Requires postage paid return postage for absentee by mail envelopes

Allows voters to register to vote within 30 days of the election

We also heard from Sen. Hughes describing [SB02](#) which includes requirements to identify the use of deepfakes and AI on media and campaign literature. As the capabilities to tamper with pictures and voices increases, legislation like this is increasingly important to protect voters from misinformation.

The final bill discussed was one in which much of it is not a benefit for Alaskan voters. It was the Governor's [SB70](#) bill. We heard from Director Carol Beecher on some of the provisions on this bill. There are numerous ways that this bill would negatively impact voters. It would roll back the opt-in voter registration on your PFD application, eliminate in person voting for communities with fewer than 750 residents, eliminate the printed voter guide, and shorten registration and ballot submission deadlines for absentee and mail-in ballots (impacting military and rural voters) among a large number of other items. Under the guise of "cost savings" - this bill would also remove Alaskan resident voters who didn't vote in the past two elections, and give more control over the counting and review of ballots to the Division of Elections. Elections should be made easier - not harder. And we need safeguards to protect us from fraud. This bill rolls us back in time. There will be more discussion on this one to see what, if any, of these items make it into the final Elections bill.

Read these bills and please take time to write emails to the [Senate State Affairs Committee](#) with your comments. We need positive election reform, as in [SB64](#) - not [SB70](#).

Education funding - will it be soon enough to help schools this year?

Hoping the legislature and the Governor can find some type of compromise?

This past week, representatives from the Governor's office and members of the legislature met behind closed doors to discuss ways to find a solution to the current impasse of education funding. The Governor is focused on increasing Charter schools and correspondence (home school) options and adjusting the BSA by removing transportation costs, and sending bonus's direct to teachers. The legislators are focused on increasing the BSA and maintaining status quo. If there isn't some type of compromise, it is feared that the results will be the same as previous years - legislators will pass an increase to the BSA, and the Governor will veto it. There doesn't appear to be enough votes to override the veto.

In addition to all of this is the uncertainty of the federal funding and support from the US Department of Education and the budget shortfalls for Alaska. If you have ideas please let your legislators know or send your comments and ideas to [House Education](#) for [HB69](#), or [Senate Education](#) or [Senate Finance](#) regarding the funding issues for Education.

Legislation Tracking

New bills of interest

Bills added from 1/27/2025 to 2/7/2025. See the [full list of bills](#) on akleg.org.

	EDUCATION/CAMPAIGN FINANCE BILLS	
HOUSE		
HB76	Education:Schools;Grants; funding;debt	House rules by request of the Governor
SENATE		
SB82	Education:Schools;Grants; funding;debt	Senate rules by request of the Governor

Upcoming Meetings - Week of February 10th

Meetings covering our watchlist bills/areas are listed below.

***How to testify:** If you can't attend in person, please call your Legislative Information Office (<http://akleg.gov/lios.php>), and also review the testimony instructions at: https://akleg.gov/docs/pdf/AKLEG_Testimony_Instructions.pdf. If you need further information contact the Juneau Legislative Information office at 907-465-4648.

House Education Committee - (Meets MWF 8:00 am Davis 106)

Send written testimony to: House.Education@akleg.gov

Monday, February 10th - Joint Meeting with Senate Education Committee

Testimony from Alaska's Public Schools by School board members and students participating in the annual fly-in of the Association of Alaska School Boards

Wednesday, February 12th

HJR05 Secure Rural Schools Program -- Public Testimony –

HB28 Teacher/State employee Student Loan Program –Invited & Public Testimony

HB69 Education funding: Increase BSA -- Testimony <Invitation Only> --

House State Affairs Committee - (Meets T TH SA 3:15 pm Gruenberg 120)

Send written testimony to: House.State.Affairs@akleg.gov

Tuesday, Feb.11th

HB04 Presidential Write-in Votes

HB21: Voter Preregistration for Minors

HB43: Elections, Voting, Ballots

HB63: School & Election Boards; Voting; Elections

Thursday, Feb.13

HB21: Voter Pre-registration for Minors- **PUBLIC TESTIMONY**

HB43: Elections, Voting, Ballots- **PUBLIC TESTIMONY** <Time Limit may be set>

Senate Education Committee - (Meets MWF 3:30 pm Beltz 105.)

Send written testimony to: Senate.Education@akleg.gov

Monday, February 10th - Note time change: 8:00 am Davis 106

Joint meeting with House Education Committee: (See above)

Wednesday, February 12th

SB41 Public Schools: Mental Health Education -- Testimony <Invitation Only> --

SB22 Financial Literacy Program in Schools -- Testimony <Invitation Only> --

SB23 Civics Education -- Testimony <Invitation Only> –

Senate State Affairs - (Meets T TH 3:30 pm Beltz 105.)

Send written testimony to: Senate.State.Affairs@akleg.gov

–no elections/education meetings this week

- February 17, 2025 - President's Day
- March 31, 2025 - Seward's Day
- April 20, 2025 - 90th day of the session (By law (AS 24.05.150))
- May 21, 2025 - 121st day of the session (Per the Alaska Constitution)

Wrap Up/Links

How are we doing?

Let us know! Reach us at alaskalwv@alaskalwv.org, and/or work to get the word out with your local leagues! Board meetings every third Monday at 5:45 pm.

The League always needs volunteers! Writing letters, talking to your legislators, and helping out by giving us your feedback - it doesn't have to be a total commitment.

We would LOVE to hear from you. Please encourage others to take action by sharing this Legislative Newsletter, Action Alerts, and Calendar Events.

Quick links:

- Alaska State Legislature website, akleg.gov
- Alaska State's Gavel to Gavel public affairs TV network, www.ktoo.org/gavel/

You can see your LWV Alaska Board members and Officers and their contact information on the AlaskaLWV.org/Board/ site.

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