

Election Policy Work Group

Meetings held on Monday, May 21, 2017 5 – 7 p.m. and Tuesday, May 22, 2017 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Atwood Building in Anchorage, AK

- Lt. Governor Mallott created a small working group at the beginning of his term to discuss election policy issues and he expanded the group to continue a dialogue on making Alaska's election system as effective, cost efficient and responsive to Alaska voter needs.
- In advance, the Division of Elections (DOE) authored the "2017 Fiscal & Policy Challenges" report for the group which outlines the issues facing the division and includes technology, elections administration and potential cost savings measures.
- Election Policy Work Group was brought together to come up with recommendations for the DOE in light of the issues outlined in the report.
- David Becker from the Center for Election Innovation and Research was brought on to help facilitate discussions.
- Update on Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) and federal funding for Alaska that was used to improve administration of elections, train election officials, provide accessible voting equipment and language assistance, improve polling place accessibility and replacement of the statewide voter registration system. Approximately \$20 million has been spent over the years and that funding is no longer available nor is any new federal funding anticipated.
- Federal and State mandates have helped create an election system that is responsive to voter needs but have also driven up costs. In light of the State fiscal crisis, how can we find ways to deliver high level of service to voters, maintain public trust and confidence while addressing the need to replace an aging ballot tabulation system with an estimated replacement cost over \$6 million?
- In 2018, the DOE will conduct elections with the current precinct based ballot tabulation system. It is a federally certified and a fully integrated system purchased in 1998 that is accurate but maintaining equipment for reliability is expensive and many parts are no longer manufactured or sold. It needs to be replaced in five years.
- Discussion with group on funding of a new system, what will it look like (including options that expand upon precinct based voting, alternative ballot delivery mechanisms like vote by mail, and other options), what are the trends going that might work for Alaska, the need for a long term solution that will serve the 21st century voter for many years.
- Recognition that this gathering is important and unique and includes a diverse group of stakeholders to help identify and explore alternative ballot tabulation solutions for Alaska and potential cost savings measures.
- A change in an election system takes a lot of discussion up front and takes a lot of time. This is about making government work and voting is a fundamental right. Cost effectiveness is critical but well-run elections are of paramount importance.
- Throughout discussions and presentations, the Elections Policy Work Group members identified guiding principles for an alternative voting system.

Guiding Principles

- Maximize Accessibility
 - Voters with disabilities
 - Language Assistance
 - Rural/Urban
 - All Alaskans eligible to vote
- Cost effectiveness
- Voter satisfaction and confidence
 - Good customer service
 - Good communication with voters
- Longevity in the solution
- Coordination
 - With the DOE, local governments, tribes, and stakeholders
- Security and Integrity
 - All systems, including tabulation system
- Voter Outreach
 - Education
 - Civic engagement

Follow-up tasks

- Look into voter pre-registration for students 16 years of age to get them involved at a younger age.
- Report how many online voter registrations have been processed since DOE went live with Online Voter Registration (OLVR).
- Voting statistics for rural Alaska. Compare similar elections that voted all by mail and in person.
- DOE will provide the numbers of ballots delivered and returned online and the count/reject compared to fax and mail.
- Estimated cost of a GIS system for reapportionment.
- A lot of discussion about voter confusion and the three ballots used in Primary Election (ADL, Rep, Ballot Measures Only). Perhaps look into other states that use a single ballot system and report.
- Further research in rural Alaska to see how a hybrid system might work. Check with ANCSA Regional on effectiveness of their by mail elections.
- Discussion about what different communities we could reach out to start the conversation. Perhaps come up with a list.
- Bringing more stakeholders into the group as discussions progress. Who and When? Like the Postmaster as we explore vote by mail.
- Formulate plan and schedule for proceeding with Work Group with input from members. Keep the momentum going and potentially reconvene in November 2017.