AN INITIATIVE AMENDING THE ELECTION PROCESS FOR ELECTION TO ALASKA STATE AND FEDERAL ELECTIVE OFFICE, EXCEPT GOVERNOR, BY ADOPTING PREFERENTIAL OR INSTANT RUN-OFF VOTING; AUTHORIZING LOCAL OPTION TO ADOPT PREFERENTIAL OR INSTANT RUN-OFF VOTING; REPEALING CONFLICTING STATUTES, AND PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

Section 1. **Findings and Purpose**

The people of the State of Alaska find that it is in the public interest to adopt an election system in Alaska, known as preferential or instant run-off voting, to insure that candidates elected are acceptable to the greatest number of voters. Under the present system, in many elections, the majority of voters voted for someone other than the winner. Preferential or instant run-off voting should have the following positive effects on Alaskan elections:

(a) Candidates will be elected by a majority vote, rather than by a mere plurality vote as often occurs under the present system,

(b) A clearer mandate for a winning candidate's position will be created, giving better direction for policy-making,

(c) The taxpayers and candidates will save money because run-off elections will no longer be necessary,

(d) Supporters of third-party, independent, or underdog candidates will not have to waste their votes in order to support their parties, issues, or candidates, but will be able to voice support for their true beliefs with their first choice votes and their acceptable choices among the remaining candidates with their second and subsequent choices,

(e) Positive issue-based campaigns will be encouraged and negative campaigning should be virtually eliminated because candidates will know that they may have to obtain the second and third choice votes of voters supporting other candidates in order to be elected,

(f) Losing candidates, who offered valid programs acceptable to some of the voters, will not be forever tagged as "spoilers", "vote-splitters", or the "candidate that ensured the election of the candidate of the opposing party",

(g) Voter interest and turn-out should increase because a voter has more choices and a voter's vote will be more valuable than it is under the present system, and

(h) The adoption of or preferential or instant run-off voting will be simple and not

confuse the voters because the system is easy and very user-friendly - as simple as 1-2-3.

Section 2. **Preferential or Instant Run-Off Voting**

Preferential or instant run-off shall be used in Alaskan elections. The ballots used in these elections shall provide that the voter may vote for candidates in order of preference, mark no more than five choices for each office, and not assign the same ranking to more than one candidate for each office. The ballot shall permit the ranking of one write-in candidate per race along with candidates whose names are printed on the ballot.

Section 3. **Counting of Ballots**

AS 15.15.350. **General Procedure for Ballot Count** shall be amended to add additional subsections to read as follows:

(a) The first choice votes of each voter for each race shall be counted first. If, after all ballots are counted, a candidate has obtained a majority of the first choice votes for that race, further counting is not necessary, and that candidate is declared the winner.

(b) If no candidate has obtained a majority of the first choice votes, then the candidate with the fewest number of first choice votes shall be declared defeated, and votes cast for this candidate shall be transferred to the next choice continuing candidate marked on each continuing ballot, and added to that continuing candidate's vote total. However, if the total of the votes of the two or more candidates credited with the lowest number of votes is less than the number of votes credited to the candidate with the next highest number of votes, these candidates shall be declared defeated simultaneously and their votes transferred to the next choice continuing candidate marked on each ballot in a single counting operation. If the next-choice candidate has been eliminated, the vote is transferred to the next-choice candidate who is a continuing candidate. After this tabulation, if no continuing candidate receives a majority of the votes, then the continuing candidate with the fewest votes shall be declared defeated. This process of eliminating last-place candidates, transferring ballots from these candidates, and adding them to the totals of continuing candidates shall proceed until a candidate has a majority of the continuing ballots, in which case that candidate is declared the winner, or there is a tie between all remaining continuing candidates.

(c) If, in any election, a ballot has no more available preferences stated, that ballot shall be declared exhausted and shall not be counted further. A ballot assigning the same ranking to more than one candidate for an office shall be declared exhausted when the double ranking is reached. If, in a primary election, a voter ranks a candidate in a particular race outside of the party for which the voter has cast the first-choice vote, then that ballot will be declared exhausted with

respect to all subsequent rankings for that particular office. If a ballot skips a ranking, then the next ranking shall be counted.

(d) If there is a tie vote between candidates, the procedures of AS 15.15.460 shall be followed.

Section 4. **Applicability**

Preferential or instant run-off voting shall be used in all primary, regular and special elections for the election of members of the Alaska Legislature, for the offices of President and Vice-President of the United States, and for members of the United States Senate and United States House of Representatives.

Section 5. **Local Option Authorized**

A municipality or school district may utilize preferential or instant run-off voting in municipal or school board elections if authorized by appropriate action of its governing body.

Section 6. **Definitions**

(a) "Continuing ballot" means a ballot that is not exhausted.

(b) "Continuing candidate" means a candidate who has not been eliminated.

(c) "Exhausted ballot" means a ballot which has no more available preferential votes which may be counted.

Section 7. **Repeal of Conflicting Statutes**

All statutes and parts of statutes which conflict with the provisions of Sections (2) through (6) of this Act are hereby repealed.

Section 8. **Severability**

The provisions of this Act are independent and severable. If any provision of this Act, or the applicability of any provision to any person or circumstance, shall be held to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act shall not be affected and shall be given effect to the fullest extent possible.