

Ballot Measure No. 2

An Act Replacing the Political Party Primary with an Open Primary System and Ranked-Choice General Election, and Requiring Additional Campaign Finance Disclosures

STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION

The So-Called “Better Elections” Initiative Will Make Alaskans Worse Off

As public servants from opposite sides of the aisle, we have had our share of disagreements. But we are united in our belief that the so-called Better Elections Initiative will make elections worse for all Alaskans. This confusing, 25-page initiative will make drastic changes to the state’s election process -- making it more difficult for Alaskans to exercise their right to vote and weakening political participation. Not surprisingly, this initiative is funded by donors who don’t live in our state and won’t have to live with the consequences.

Why Our Elections Will Be Worse, Not Better

This initiative would replace Alaska’s current primary system--a straightforward process where voters from each party pick their preferred candidate for the general election--with what’s called an “open top-four primary.” This new system, also called a “Jungle Primary,” creates a single primary in which everyone votes, with the top four candidates advancing to the general election.

Under this system, it’s possible for four candidates of a single political party to win the primary, shutting out the other political parties from even appearing on the ballot. Whether you’re a registered Democrat, Republican, Unaffiliated or some other registration, this potential lack of representation at the ballot box is deeply disturbing.

A New Scheme to Depress Voter Turnout

In addition to wiping out the state’s primary system, it would also eliminate our historic general election system in favor of a scheme called Ranked Choice Voting.

Right now, the voting process is simple: voters pick a candidate, and the candidate with a majority of votes wins. Under a Ranked Choice Voting scheme, Alaskans are presented with a confusing grid where candidates are ranked. A voter who only picks the candidate of their choice, and declines to rank others, could find their ballot excluded from the final vote count. It’s as though the voter didn’t show up for the election.

We Shouldn’t Make It More Confusing to Vote

A San Francisco State University professor found a clear decline in minority voter turnout when Ranked Choice Voting was implemented. Not surprisingly, many states and locales that experimented with rank choice voting have since repealed it. When this policy was considered in New York City, the NAACP New York State Conference opposed it, and the chairs of the city’s Black, Latino and Asian caucuses said it hurts “immigrants and communities of color.”

Vote “NO” on Worse Elections

We want to see more Alaskans show up to vote, regardless of their political party. This ballot measure will have the opposite effect--potentially locking political parties out of the general election, and making Alaskans doubt if their vote even counts. The Better Elections Initiative will only make Alaska’s election system less inclusive, not more. We encourage our fellow Alaskans to vote no.

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