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Introduced: 02/25/2021
Postponed: 02/25/2021
Substituted: 04/08/2021
Adopted: 04/08/2021

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH

RESOLUTION NO. 2021 – 05

A RESOLUTION OPPOSING LEGISLATIVE BILLS THAT RESTRICT VOTER ACCESS, LIMIT THE ABILITY TO EXERCISE THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO VOTE, OR WOULD OTHERWISE ACT TO SUPPRESS THE VOTES OF ALASKAN CITIZENS

WHEREAS, Free and fair elections are the indispensable foundation of Alaska’s democratic government, and the source of its very legitimacy; it is only through such elections that Alaskans can choose their government and give their consent to be governed. The greater their participation in elections, the stronger and more vibrant their democracy becomes; and

WHEREAS, Every eligible Alaskan citizen has a fundamental right to vote; and

WHEREAS, In recent decades, the democratic character of American elections has been eroded by voter suppression measures. Voters in many states now face challenges of voter suppression bills such as limiting mail voting access, imposing stricter voter identification requirements; slashing voter registration opportunities and enabling more aggressive voter roll purges; and

WHEREAS, These voter suppression bills take many forms and collectively lead to the disenfranchisement of eligible voters, particularly people of color, women, students and poor, elderly, infirm, and disabled Alaskans; and

WHEREAS, On November 8, 2016, Alaska voters approved Ballot Measure 1, Alaska Voter Registration via the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) Application, which allows simultaneous voter registration when an eligible citizen applies for the yearly PFD while still allowing any citizen who does not want to register to vote to opt out; and

40 WHEREAS, Requiring eligible citizens to request to register to vote during
41 the PFD application process will result in fewer citizens applying to register as part of that
42 process, since it will be easy to overlook the requirement to check a box; and

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44 WHEREAS, The State of Alaska, Division of Elections estimated that
45 approximately 70,000 eligible Alaska citizens have become new, registered voters within
46 the first year of passage; and

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48 WHEREAS, The State of Alaska, Permanent Fund Division already uses
49 comprehensive fraud detection analysis that prevents voter registration fraud, allowing
50 Alaska to have the most accurate voter database in the nation; and

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52 WHEREAS, Prohibiting the long-standing ability for absentee voting by
53 facsimile will restrict Alaskans who are unable to vote in-person to have their vote
54 counted; and

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56 WHEREAS, The current requirement that ballots are spoiled by physically
57 ripping them and then storing the pieces in an envelope allows for accounting for spoiled
58 ballots in a form where it is impossible for them to accidentally be scanned and counted,
59 while the proposed requirement for spoiled ballots to be stored in an envelope without
60 physical destruction increases the possibility that votes on spoiled ballots would be
61 inadvertently counted, against the will of the voter; and

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63 WHEREAS, Election workers are required to take an oath of office before
64 performing their duties, attend training, follow security protocols for ballots and election
65 equipment to ensure the integrity of the election process; and

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67 WHEREAS, Prohibiting municipalities from mailing ballots to registered
68 voters, and thus making vote-by-mail impossible, restricts the ability of these
69 municipalities to run their elections in the way that best meets the needs of their voters,
70 disproportionately impacting rural Alaska; and

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72 WHEREAS, These types of legislative bills have an unjustifiable impact on
73 Alaskan voters; and

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75 WHEREAS, Legislative bills drafted, which prohibit vote-by-mail in general
76 law municipalities, further disadvantage residents of the Fairbanks North Star Borough
77 and other non-home rule municipalities; and

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79 WHEREAS, Efforts to increase the ability of all eligible Alaskans to vote in
80 any secure way possible, should be increased, not decreased; and

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82 WHEREAS, Bills that seek to undo the clear directive of Alaska's voters by
83 eliminating Automatic Voter Registration and the ability to vote-by-mail for most Alaskans
84 suppress the ability of Alaskan voters to register and cast their vote; and

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86 WHEREAS, Legislative bills should not restrict local government control,
87 specifically regarding by-mail elections and the ability of local government to determine
88 how elections are administered; and

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90 WHEREAS, Legislative bills that criminalize any person who transports more
91 than one absentee or special needs ballot, even if that person is a family member will
92 unnecessarily impact voting opportunities for the elderly and disabled citizens; for
93 example, an adult child could not assist both parents in the transport of their absentee
94 ballot to the Post Office or to an official drop box or be a representative for both parents
95 to obtain a special needs ballot simultaneously; and

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97 WHEREAS, These types of legislative bills would make it more difficult to
98 organize voter registration drives, eliminate same day voter registration, reduce the
99 duration of early voting periods, purge eligible voters from the rolls and make it more
100 difficult to restore voting rights for previously incarcerated citizens who have paid their
101 debt to society; and

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103 WHEREAS, These legislative bills, if passed, could impose additional costs
104 on the state of Alaska at a time when state funds are needed to support other important
105 priorities.

106
107 NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Assembly of the Fairbanks
108 North Star Borough strongly opposes legislative bills which propose to take any action
109 which would restrict voter access of Alaskan citizens, limit Alaska citizens' ability to
110 exercise their fundamental right to vote, or would otherwise act to suppress the votes of
111 Alaskan citizens, or that reduce local control over municipal elections.

112
113 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Assembly requests the Clerk distribute
114 a copy of this resolution to each member of the Alaska Legislature, Governor Mike
115 Dunleavy, Lt. Governor Kevin Meyer and Director of the Division of Elections, Gail
116 Fenumiai.

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ADOPTED THE 8TH DAY OF APRIL 2021.


Mindy O'Neall
Presiding Officer

ATTEST:


April Trickey, CMC
Borough Clerk

Yeses: Williams, Sanford, Cooper, Lyke, O'Neall
Noes: Cash, Wilson, Tomaszewski, Lojewski