



STATUS OF BALLOT MEASURE 2— ALASKANS FOR BETTER ELECTIONS

- January 8: Alaskans for Better Elections turns in 41,068 Signatures from 40 of 40 House Districts.
- February 19: Better Elections is the first ballot initiative to reach minimum certification requirements (~29,000 signatures verified by AK DOE, from 30 of 40 House Districts).
- February 19: Scott Kendall, Legal Counsel and Chief Advisor to the Campaign, delivered oral arguments to the Alaska Supreme Court after an appeal to a lower court ruling in favor of the initiative was filed by the State of Alaska. The sole issue in the case is whether or not Ballot Measure 2 is constitutional under the Alaska Constitution's single-subject rule.
- March 9: The Alaska Division of Elections announces official Certification.
- June 12: the Alaska Supreme Court affirms that Ballot Measure 2 will appear on the November ballot.
- Read more about the constitutionality of all the components in Ballot Measure 2 [here](#).

SUMMARY

Ballot Measure 2 seeks to give more choice, more voice, and more power to every Alaska voter by improving the way we elect our representatives.

More Choice—Over 62% of Alaskans choose not to identify with either major political party, but yet their ability to vote for the candidate of their choice is restricted by the current partisan primary system.

More Voice—Our current first-past-the-post elections allow a candidate in a race with three or more candidates to win without receiving the support of a majority of voters (50%+1). Voters are therefore discouraged from voting for more independent, community-oriented candidates that they may prefer for fear of helping elect the candidate they like the least.

More Power—The sharp rise in secret dark money spending on elections in Alaska in the past decade and a half makes it difficult for voters to make an informed decision because they don't know the true identity of those spending money to influence their vote.



Ballot Measure 2 contains three commonsense reforms to make Alaska’s elections more open, transparent, and fair.

Fighting “Dark Money”—Alaskans have a right to know who is spending money to influence their vote. Ballot Measure 2 exposes the influence of “dark money” by requiring disclosure of the real source of any campaign contribution greater than \$2,000 to a candidate or an Independent Expenditure group supporting that candidate within 24 hours. Any group receiving more than 50% of its funding from outside Alaska must provide a disclaimer with that information on all public communications. Strengthening the state’s disclosure requirements will diminish the effect of “dark money” in Alaska.

Opening Primaries—More than 62% of registered voters in Alaska choose not to affiliate with one of the two major political parties. Ballot Measure 2 ensures that our fiercely independent voters have an equal opportunity to choose Alaska’s leaders—regardless of party. Ballot Measure 2 will establish an open and nonpartisan “Top 4” primary elections system in Alaska—boosting voter turnout and encouraging bipartisanship in elected officials. All candidates will appear on a single primary ballot, and therefore all voters can vote for any candidates of their choice regardless of political affiliation.

Establishing Ranked Choice Voting in General Elections—Ranked choice voting gives Alaskans more choices, eliminates the spoiler effect, encourages campaigns to engage voters on issues, and helps ensure that winners are elected with the support of a true majority of voters. Ballot Measure 2 will establish a ranked choice system for the general election, ensuring that winning candidates have the support of the majority of voters. Ranked choice voting is an easy and effective reform that gives voters the power to rank candidates on their ballot in order of preference if they so choose. If no candidate receives majority support of first-place votes, an “instant runoff” is used until one candidate earns 50%+1 of the vote.



Setting up Alaska for the Elections System of the Future—By going to a single primary ballot, Ballot Measure 2 removes barriers and gives nonpartisan voters and candidates the same rights as partisan voters and candidates, in addition to simplifying the electoral process for the state during events like COVID-19.

Taken together, these simple reforms to how we vote will increase competition, participation, and accountability in our government.



ELEMENTS OF THE INITIATIVE

Each of the proposed reforms has the support of different groups of Alaska voters, making success more likely. Dark money disclosure will serve to blunt objections or outright opposition from honest candidates and elected officials unashamed of where their funding comes from. To the extent that well-financed interests seek to defeat the measure, it will serve as an example of why reform is needed.

Indeed, the appearance of the measure on the ballot by itself should be a defining factor in its success. Recent research from other states shows that ballot measures being on the ballot can help drive lower-propensity voters to turn out in more significant numbers. Specifically, when young people (18-35) and minority voters identify personally with a ballot measure, they are 50% more likely to turn out and vote.

Strengthening Campaign Disclosure Laws Reduces the Influence of Dark Money on Alaska's Elections

The term “Dark Money” refers to political spending by nonprofit organizations that aren’t required to disclose their donors or whose donors are obscured by one or more intermediary or pass-through organizations that mask the “true source” of the funding. These organizations can then “combine their powers” with an independent expenditure group, (aka a “SuperPAC”), which does have to report their donors. However, when a non-disclosing entity contributes to an independent expenditure group, the “true source” of the funds remains secret.

Dark Money is a growing problem. The amount of Dark Money—and its percentage as a total of all political spending—has grown exponentially in each election since 2010.

- Over \$818 million in dark money was spent nationwide in the 2018 Election Cycle alone, according to [Open Secrets](#).
- In Alaska, over \$15.7 million in dark money was spent on elections [since 2014](#). Between 2014 and 2018, spending on Alaska campaigns increased from \$3.9 million to \$14.1 million.
- [The vast majority of Americans support reforms](#) to curb the secret influence of special-interest dark money.

There is no limit to the amount of money an individual, union, or corporation can contribute to an independent expenditure group, making disclosure of the true



source of the funds the only protection the public has. Recent court decisions have gutted Alaska’s campaign finance disclosure requirements rendering many of them ineffective. Having suffered through five election cycles under these conditions, Alaska’s campaign disclosure laws are overdue for a fix that increases transparency and accountability.

Requiring independent expenditure groups to report the “true source” of any contribution, or cumulative annual contributions, of \$2,000 or more in real-time to the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC), ensures Alaskans have a clear picture of who is attempting to influence their vote.

Open Primaries will Result in Higher Turnout, Better Candidates, and More Functional Legislatures

Currently, a tiny group of primary voters selects the choices that appear on the general election ballot. The terms “Republican,” “Democrat,” and “political party” appear nowhere in Alaska’s Constitution. *Why then should state funds pay for the activities of partisan political parties, or should public resources be used to support their selection of candidates?*

Political parties have a role—often a positive one—in civic life. However, they should use their own resources and their own processes to decide which candidates to support. *Parties should not be allowed to act as state-subsidized gatekeepers regarding who appears on the ballot.*

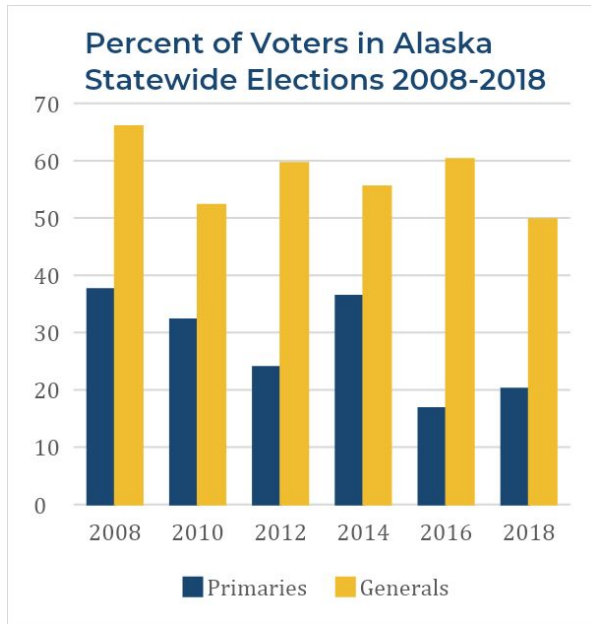
The current primary election process disenfranchises Alaskans by requiring moderate and nonpartisan voters to pick either one ballot or the other, restricting the candidates they can vote for—a factor that contributes to low primary turnout. Open primaries allow voters to pick the candidate of their choice regardless of party affiliation.

Primary turnout is much more erratic than general election turnout, but, on average, less than half (48.8%) of voters participated in the primary compared with the general election over the last decade. Low participation in primaries can lead to candidates appearing on the general election ballot who represent the partisan extremes of their parties. It also results in a general election electorate unfamiliar with or unsupportive of their eventual choices on the general election ballot.



YES ON 2

FOR BETTER ELECTIONS



2018—General turnout=**49.8%**; Primary ADL 7.5% + Primary R 12.7% = Primary turnout **20.2%**

2016—General turnout=**60.3%**; Primary ADL 6.1% + Primary R 10.7% = Primary turnout **16.8%**

2014—General turnout=**55.5%**; Primary ADL 14.1% + Primary R 22.3% = Primary turnout **36.4%**

2012—General turnout=**59.6%**; Primary ADL 8.7% + Primary R 15.3% = Primary turnout **24.0%**

2010—General turnout=**52.3%**; Primary ADL 9.9% + Primary R 22.4% = Primary turnout **32.3%**

2008—General turnout=**66.0%**; Primary ADL 15.9% + Primary R 21.7% = Primary turnout **37.6%**

Transitioning back to open primaries will boost voter turnout in both the primary election and the general election. [Nonpartisan research](#) has found that open primaries have higher turnout than closed or semi-closed primaries. Additionally, research demonstrates that when a voter has an opportunity to vote for a candidate in the primary, they are much more likely to show up to support them again in the general election. Alaska used to have open primaries—known as a “blanked primary”—but thanks to a lawsuit from Outside, Alaska was forced to abandon it in the early 2000s. Up until that point, an open primary worked well for Alaska voters.

Even the few moderate or pragmatic party candidates who are elected are eventually driven away from cooperation and bipartisanship once in office. This is the foreseeable result of a system that requires them to first run the gauntlet of a primary election with a much smaller, more partisan group of voters, before being allowed to make their re-election appeal to all registered voters in the general.

What sort of behavior do we want our elections to incentivize: Representing the interests of all Alaskans or catering to the narrow wishes of partisan party bosses? *Absent electoral reform, bipartisanship, coalition building, and cooperation are at risk of becoming extinct.*

With the presence of a pandemic, like the Coronavirus, the state needs to have the



ability to transition to vote by mail seamlessly. A single primary ballot primary eases this transition. Additionally, it shields the state from the risk of election irregularities, like the recent lawsuit from multiple primary ballots being given out in 2016, and it saves a few dollars in reduced printing and mailing costs on every ballot. Anywhere the state can be more efficient is beneficial to all Alaskans.

Ranked Choice Voting Ensures Winning Candidates Have The Support Of A Majority of Voters, Encourages Healthy Competition, And Boosts Turnout Further.

Competition is good. Ballot Measure 2 creates a free-market election system in Alaska that encourages greater participation among eligible voters and ensures that any winning candidate does so with support from a majority of voters. It does this by conducting an instant runoff for any race in which a candidate has not received more than 50% of the vote.

In an instant runoff, using ranked choice voting, the candidate with the fewest votes after the first round is eliminated, and voters who picked that candidate as their first choice have their votes count instead for their next choice. This process continues until a candidate wins with more than 50% support from voters, ensuring that the eventual winner has the support of the majority of the electorate. Majority rule is better than plurality because it encourages elected officials to represent all of their constituents and not just a small partisan base.

Ranked choice voting increases competition by eliminating the “spoiler effect” argument for non-establishment, third party, and independent candidates, and allows voters to support the candidate they like best instead of forcing them to choose between the lesser of two evils.

- Five state Democratic parties used ranked choice voting in presidential primary elections and caucuses in 2020, including Alaska. Despite a global pandemic, all five states [had high rates of success and higher turnout with ranked choice voting](#) than their previous primaries.
- About 75 percent of voters reported ranked choice voting was “somewhat” or “very” easy when it was used in Maine’s 2nd Congressional District, according to an exit survey conducted by the [Bangor Daily News](#).
- [A 2016 study](#) found that ranked choice voting increases voter turnout by about 10 percent.



For more information about Ballot Measure 2 and how updating Alaska's elections can lead to a better Alaska, go to www.AlaskansForBetterElections.com, or contact us at info@alaskansforbetterelections.com.