

**Decide Alaska's Future.**

**VOTE ✓**



**Election Policy Work Group**

July 18, 2017

# 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

- DOE, local governments, tribes and stakeholders

## ✓ Security and Integrity

- All systems, including tabulation systems

## ✓ Voter Outreach

- Education
- Civic Engagement

The Division of Elections reviewed information about Alaska's current by mail voting processes, gathered information about other vote by mail states, and assessed the feasibility of adopting a vote by mail system for Alaska.

The following information reflects considerations for implementing a vote by mail program.



# Alternative Ballot Delivery

## Mail Voting in Other States

### Colorado

- Implemented statewide in 2013
- All active voters receive a ballot in the mail for every election
- Dropboxes widely available to drop off ballots
- Multiple vote centers available in every county where the 5-10% of voters who prefer to vote in person can receive and vote a ballot

### Oregon

- 2000 statewide was adopted for all counties
- All active voters receive a ballot in the mail for every election
- Dropboxes widely available to drop off ballots
- Only in person voting option is on Election Day, at the county election office

### Washington

- 2011 all counties except Pierce County were vote by mail
- Legislation was passed requiring all counties after 2011
- All active voters receive a ballot in the mail for every election
- Dropboxes widely available to drop off ballots
- Only in person voting option is on Election Day, at the county election office

# Voting in Alaska Today

## Precinct Based In Person Voting

- Precinct election boards
- Voting on Election Day at 441 precincts
- Voting equipment
  - 511 touch screen units with 441 used in precincts
  - 361 optical scan units with 304 used in precincts
  - 137 hand count precincts

## Early / Absentee In Person Voting

- Available 15 day prior to Election Day
- Absentee voting stations (AVS) with all 40 district ballots – 16 SW locations
- Absentee voting officials (AVO) with one district ballot – 163 locations

## Special Needs Voting

- Available 15 days prior to Election Day and at the polls on Election Day
- Voter is assisted by a personal representative

## Electronic Transmission Voting (Fax and Online Delivery)

- Available 15 days prior Election Day in Statewide Elections (UOCAVA 45 days)

## By Mail Voting

- Voters may apply in January of a calendar year
- Voters in remote areas and those with a disability are sent absentee ballot application to apply
- Division conducts all by mail elections for special local elections (incorporation, dissolution, liquor option and some REAA school board elections)



# Exploring Alaska Alternative Ballot Delivery and Return Methods

## Ballot Delivery Method

- Each active registered voter will be mailed a ballot and voting materials
- Voters may choose to vote in person at an in person location and not vote their by mail ballot

## Voting Stations

(All 40 House District Ballots Available)

- Voters may vote in person
- Voters may receive a replacement ballot or get a ballot if they did not receive a ballot in the mail
- Trained on all aspects of the voting process
- Available 15 days prior to Election Day
- Language assistance materials available
- Serve as a location to return voted ballots
- Voter assistance in all aspects of the voting process
- Disability voting systems

## Voting Officials

(Community District Ballot(s) Available)

- Serve as community outreach person
- Voters may vote in person
- Voters may receive a replacement ballot or get a ballot if they did not receive a ballot in the mail
- Trained on all aspects of the voting process
- Available 15 days prior to Election Day
- Bi-lingual worker and language assistance materials available in targeted communities
- Serve as a location to return voted ballots - drop box
- Voter assistance in all aspects of the voting process

## Ballot Return Method

- Voters may return their ballot by mail
- Voters may return their ballot in person to a Voting Station or Voting Official
- Voters may return their ballot using at a drop box



# Exploring Alaska Alternative Ballot Delivery and Return Methods

## 2016 Absentee Voting Locations

- Region 1 – Southeast Alaska, Prince William Sound, Kodiak and Kenai Peninsula  
33 rural  
15 urban  
**48 total locations**
- Region 2 – Municipality of Anchorage, Matanuska-Susitna Borough  
10 urban  
**10 total locations**
- Region 3 – Fairbanks, Interior, Eastern Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Valdez  
32 rural  
4 urban  
**36 total locations**
- Region 4 – Northern, Western and Southwest Alaska, Aleutian Chain  
84 rural  
1 urban  
**85 total locations**

## Hybrid System

- Combination of by mail and in person ballot delivery and return methods
- Urban and rural communities will maintain existing in person voting locations and add additional new locations
- Target to have a voting official in each rural community



# Cost Trends in Other Jurisdictions

## General Trends for Decrease in Costs because of Vote by Mail

- Decrease in training costs
- Decrease in the number of election day polling places
- Decrease in hiring temporary workers
- Lower administrative costs
- Lower costs for the maintenance of voting equipment
- Decrease rental fees for election day polling places

## General Trends for Increase in Costs because of Vote by Mail

- Postal Costs
- Printing of envelopes and materials
- Initial cost of buying equipment for vote by mail



STATE	COST STUDY
<b>Colorado</b>	Save approximately \$1.05 per voter; spent 1.5 million for voting equipment; Pew estimates the new program could eventually save Colorado \$5 million in two year period.
<b>Oregon</b>	Approximately 1/3 to 1/2 the costs of an in person election; amounts to around \$3 million a year in savings.
<b>Washington</b>	No concrete numbers; many websites state that costs have decreased for Washington.
<b>California</b>	Will start in 2018; in 1999 study by Orange County estimated a saving of approximately \$200,000 per election.
<b>California</b>	Yolo County had a cost savings of 43%.
<b>California</b>	San Diego County first special election for Assembly seat estimated a cost of \$8.75 per voter for mailed ballot versus \$221.43 for in person voting and the second election, city council seat, was \$8.60 per voter versus \$110.07 per voter.
<b>Montana</b>	A cost estimate was completed in 2011 and it was concluded that vote by mail would save the state approximately \$2 million an election cycle.



# Regional Office Considerations

## Areas of Potential Redistribution of Current Program Funds

- Questioned, absentee review boards and regional Accu-Vote boards
  - Potential reduction in the number of boards required in the regional office depending on the structure of the vote by mail system
  - Approximately \$105,000 spent in 2016
- Equipment
  - Space and storage (reduction in needed storage space)
  - Maintenance and repair (reduction in time spent on maintenance and repair)
  - Shipping and delivery (approximately \$228,000 spent in shipping and delivery of voting equipment and supplies in 2016)
- Election worker recruitment and payment
  - Potential savings in substantially reducing the number of election workers needed i.e., precinct workers, telephone workers, ballot loggers, and temporary employees
  - Approximately \$746,600 spent on just precinct worker pay and polling place pay in 2016
- Election worker training and travel
  - Reduction in the number of workers who will receive training
  - Estimated \$350,00 spent in travel to train election officials in previous election cycles
- Polling place recruitment
  - 441 precincts will no longer need to be recruited



# Exploring Alternative Ballot Delivery and Return Methods

## Procedural Changes to Consider

- Sending out ballot packages
- Return, review and counting ballots
- Regional voting stations
- In person voting officials
- Voter fraud protection
- Post election processes
- Identification of statutory changes
- REAA elections



# Exploring Alternative Ballot Delivery and Return Methods

## Additional Considerations

- Informed voters
- Longer voting period for voters
- Consistency of increased uniformity of how ballots are processed
- Less administrative burden and cost savings
- Impacts on voter turnout
- Possible voter fraud and coercion
- Tradition of going to the polls



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