

STATEMENT OF POSITION

The League of Women Voters of Alaska believes that the Alaska legislative system should be responsive, representative, accessible, efficient, and accountable. We feel that the legislative structure, which would best accomplish this goal, contains the following elements.

- Measures to facilitate the budgetary process;
- Clearly delineated procedures for legislative committee action and treatment of legislation during all states of the process.
- Conference committee and free conference committee deliberations that are open, judicious, germane and subject to public notice.
- Caucus should be open with exception of circumstances involving prejudicial and personnel matters.
- Procedures followed which maximize consolidation of effort between the two houses of the Legislature.
- Easy availability to information for the public concerning legislative activities and ease of access for public participation in the legislative process.
- Procedures that enhance operational effectiveness including clear enforcement of rules.

AMPLIFICATION

Budget and Legislative Oversight

- The legislature should conduct a study to look into the matter of biennial budgeting and its specific applicability to Alaska.
- The use of joint finance committee meetings, at least for the purpose of holding hearings, should be strongly encouraged.

Bill Procedures and Uniform Rules

- During the first weeks of a session, a minimum of floor sessions should be held, with most of the time allocated for committee meetings.
- Bill assignments should be made only to committees responsible for the subject matter.
- Bills "by committee by request" should require the written approval of a majority of the committee concerned before they may be introduced.
- The Rules should require committees to report, by a time certain, one way or another on all bills referred to them.
- A statement of purpose or other concise, written explanation should be required for all bills and joint resolutions with a letter of transmittal attached.

(Continued)

- The prohibition of amending one bill onto another (piggybacking) should be maintained unless approval is obtained from a majority of the members of the committee that has or has had jurisdiction over the "carrier" bill. Some tracking mechanism should be devised whereby bills that have become amendments to other bills are indicated as such.

Conference Committees

- Conference committees and free conference committees should be subject to public notice requirements, and their meetings should be open to the public.
- Free conference committees should be restricted in the kinds of changes they may make in the bill under consideration; any such changes must be germane to the question.
- A waiting period should be required between the time a free conference committee or conference committee makes available its written report and the time the floor vote is taken.

Structure

- The Alaska Legislature should attempt, through Rules changes and other means, to improve the operation of its bicameral structure. Such methods might include more judicious use of joint interim committees and holding joint standing committee hearings.

Public Information and Participation

- Advance notice of committee hearings should be formally required and a standardized manner prescribed in the Rules for posting such notice.
- A coordinated and well-publicized statewide distribution of hearing schedules via the media and the Legislative Affairs Agency be maintained.
- A toll-free telephone service should be instituted, emphasizing that all committee meetings are open to the public.
- Formal committee rules should be adopted, and all committees should be required to follow the same procedures. Enforcement procedures should be included and House and Senate leaders held accountable for their adherence.
- Mason's Rules for Legislative Procedures should be followed.
- Record keeping methods should be standardized and records should be readily available to the public.

Administration and Management

- Orientation of new legislators should provide for information from legislators leaving office.
- More controls should be placed on the creation, funding and evaluation of interim committees during the second session of the legislature.
- House and Senate standing committees should be encouraged to meet jointly.
- The standing committee jurisdiction set forth in the Rules should be reviewed periodically and changes made when necessary.
- Committees should represent the proportion of majority/minority members as required in Rules.

Adopted ??; Revised 1993; Reaffirmed each year since at LWVAK Convention.