

# League of Women Voters of Alaska

## Government

## Position: Election Processes and Procedures

### Statement of Position

The League of Women Voters of Alaska (LWVAK) believes voting is a fundamental citizen's right that must be guaranteed. LWVAK works to protect that right and to increase voter participation by all citizens. The LWVAK believes the state has an obligation to provide voters with accurate information so that voters can make reasoned choices. The LWVAK supports elections that are free, fair, and accessible and transparent.

### **I. REDISTRICTING**

The League of Women Voters of Alaska (LWVAK) believes that current redistricting guidelines have historically lead to partisan redistricting, despite the intent of the Alaska Constitution. LWVAK supports a process that is independent from the legislature and other elected and appointed persons, that is non-partisan, favors no incumbents or political parties, and promotes electoral competition. Redistricting board composition should reflect the diversity of the state, including citizens-at-large, representatives of public interest groups, and members of minority groups and a range of socioeconomic groups rather than political party interests in Alaska, where the majority of registered voters are nonpartisan or undeclared.

Whether through Constitutional amendment or Alaska state statutes, the procedures and standards of the Alaska Redistricting Board should include the following points:

- A. Specific timelines for the steps leading to a redistricting plan.
- B. Redistricting must be accomplished in an open, unbiased procedure with citizen participation and access at all levels and steps of the process of redistricting at every level of government.
- C. Individuals should be eligible to serve on the Redistricting Board only if they satisfy additional criteria designed to increase the degree to which members of the Board are both independent and perceived to be independent from elected officials.
- D. Redistricting efforts should be subject to open meeting laws with full disclosure throughout with a process using public hearings, electronic meetings, and written notice on the plan(s) proposed for adoption.
- E. The redistricting plan adopted by the Redistricting Board should meet the following provisions:
  1. Adoption of the plan with more than a simple majority voter of the board.
  2. Resources and staffing available equally to all board members.
  3. Reviews of fairness using recognized geographic, quantitative, and geometric testing. Such testing should be used to test for (and weed out) extreme unfairness, rather than aiming for a purportedly "ideal" score on one or more quantitative measures.
  4. Posting to the public should include written notice, public hearings in multiple locations and electronic meeting opportunities, and development and maintenance of an online presence.
  5. Technology should be made available for public use so that citizens can make, submit, and evaluate suggested maps or portions of maps relevant to local communities.
  6. In addition to existing Alaskan redistricting standards (Alaska Constitution, article VI, Section 6) expressly specify as a matter of state law adherence to standards specified in the U.S. Voting Rights Act.

### Judicial Review

Speedy judicial review and appeal is of paramount importance to ensure that each election is conducted under a plan that is not in contention. The court should promptly review and rule on any challenge to a redistricting plan and require adjustments if the standards have not been met. Time limits should be set for initiating court action for review.

Provisions should be made for court review of redistricting measures and for courts to require the redistricting board to act on a predetermined schedule. Remedial provisions should be established in the event that the redistricting authority fails to enact a plan. A plan approved by the court should be enforceable by the court.

## **II. METHODS OF VOTING**

The LWVAK supports a variety of voting methods, in addition to voting at the polls, which provide cost effective opportunities to maintain and expand access to the voting process for all eligible voters.

## **III. FELON RIGHTS**

The LWVAK supports providing the right to vote to felons who have completed their incarceration time rather than having this right restored after their probation and/or parole. Further, the LWVAK supports the provision of appropriate information and assistance to felons who have completed their incarceration in order to facilitate their voter registration or re-registration.

## **IV. VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS AT THE POLLS**

Identification required of registered voters at the polls should be readily available to all citizens at no cost, including the indirect cost of obtaining proof of identity such as birth certificates. Voters should be able to use one of several forms of identification.

## **V. VOTER INFORMATION**

The LWVAK supports the publication and distribution of a State of Alaska Voter's Pamphlet prior to each statewide primary and general election.

In addition to the pamphlet contents itemized in AS 15.58.020, LWVAK believes the following:

- a. All ballot measures must include official explanatory statements of effects on a "yes" vote and a "no" vote, fiscal impact, and summaries of the main arguments for and against the measures.
- b. The number of arguments for and against the measures should be limited.
- c. Ballot titles and measures need to be stated in clear, concise language and should avoid confusing negatives.
- d. The pamphlet shall not contain political advertisement by political parties, other organizations or individuals, including candidates.

## **VI. VOTING SECURITY**

The LWVAK concurs with the LWV of the United States' position on voting systems that are designed, developed, and implemented so that the following is followed:

- a. The voting systems employ a voter-verifiable paper ballot or other paper record, said paper

being the official record of the voter's intent. This should not preclude the use of ballot-marking devices that produce a voter-verifiable paper ballot, including devices that facilitate voting by persons with disabilities and those whose primary language is not English.

- b. The voter can verify, either by eye or with the aid of suitable devices for those who have impaired vision, that the paper ballot/record accurately reflects his or her intent.
- c. Such verification takes place while the voter is still in the process of voting.
- d. The paper ballot/record is used for audits and recounts.
- e. The vote totals can be verified by independent hand count of the paper ballot/record.
- f. Routine audits of the paper ballot/record in randomly selected precincts are conducted in every election, and the results published by the jurisdiction

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