

STOP ELECTION MANIPULATION INITIATIVE COMMITTEE

Jesse Sumner, Zack Fields, Rebecca Himschoot

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Sponsors Propose Initiative to Require Meaningful Alaskan Support for Candidates Before They Appear on the Ballot *Requirements would reduce manipulation of Alaska's elections.*

ANCHORAGE—Three Alaskans who have served in Alaska's legislature submitted an application for a new initiative that would require candidates for public office to demonstrate reasonable local support before appearing on the ballot.

"Requiring candidates to have some skin in the game and publicly demonstrate support from qualified Alaska voters will reduce the gamesmanship and gimmicks," said Zack Fields, a Democrat from Anchorage. "Voters deserve real competition with serious candidates."

"Running for office and public service take hard work and commitment," said Jesse Sumner, a former legislator, and Republican, from Wasilla. "Instead of simply writing a check, candidates should have to speak to voters in their communities and earn their support to get on the ballot."

"We believe this strikes the right balance between opening the door to new voices and reducing the ability to manipulate our elections for political gain," said Rebecca Himschoot, an independent from Sitka. "A modest signature requirement fits our open election system by allowing Alaska voters to vet candidates before they appear on the ballot."

The United States Constitution provides very broad access to the ballot, requiring only that a candidate be a resident of a state on the day that they would assume Federal office. These eligibility requirements cannot be changed or added to by state law. This is how Alaska has seen multiple candidates in recent cycles, such as incarcerated felon Eric Hafner, who have never even been to Alaska. Some pundits have wrongly attributed this phenomenon to Alaska's open primary, ranked choice voting election system. This measure's changes to *filing* requirements addresses this problem.

Alaska legislative races have also seen many candidates engage in last-minute filings and drop outs in order to render races non-competitive. These signature requirements will also address this issue.

The proposed initiative would make the following changes:

- Requires candidates for state and federal office to have signatures from Alaska voters as follows:
 - 1,000 qualified Alaska voters for statewide offices: Governor/Lt. Governor; United States senator, and United States representative.
 - 100 qualified Alaskan voters who live in the same senate district for state senator.
 - 50 qualified Alaskan voters who live in the same house district for state representative.

- Increases filing fees to offset costs for the Alaska Division of Elections to validate the signatures as follows:
 - \$500 (from \$100) for statewide offices: Governor/Lt. Governor; United States senator, and United States representative.
 - \$100 (from \$30) for state senator and state representative.

The application was filed today with the Lieutenant Governor, who has 60 calendar days to review and certify, or deny, the proposed language.

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