



# Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

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## *Voting Paper Trail Bill Passes*

### *House Bill 459 helps ensure honest and accurate voting*

JUNEAU – Legislators acted decisively today to ensure the integrity of Alaska elections by passing House Bill 459 by Representatives Les Gara (D-Anchorage) and John Harris (R-Valdez). The bill requires that all votes cast in Alaska on electronic voting machines be simultaneously recorded on paper in a fashion that allows the voter to check that the ballot is accurate. The bill won overwhelming support in both the House and the Senate.

“This measure is a strong step forward in preserving Alaskans’ faith that elections are fair and honest,” said Representative Harris.

Senator Johnny Ellis (D-Anchorage) and Representative Gara first introduced bills requiring a voter-verifiable paper record. Representative Harris, a leader in the House Majority caucus, agreed to sponsor the measure in a bid to win bipartisan approval.

“Fair elections are not a partisan matter,” said Representative Gara. “I’m glad members of both parties could work together to get this bill passed.”

Alaska currently uses machines that optically scan a paper ballot, automatically creating a paper trail that can be hand-counted if necessary. However, the Division of Elections has recently purchased 100 touch-screen machines intended to make voting easier for physically disabled voters. These machines do not provide a back up method of recording votes, nor any way for voters to make sure the machine recorded their votes accurately.

HB459 limits the use of touch-screen voting machines to one per precinct, except in special cases, and would mandate that by 2006, all such machines be equipped with a voter verifiable paper trail. The bill would also make the current optically scanned paper ballot system the Alaska standard.

“The current system is accepted by voters and has been a great success in making elections less costly and more efficient,” said Senator Ellis.

HB459 heads now to the Governor for signature.

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Sen. Bettye Davis, Sen. Johnny Ellis, Sen. Kim Elton, Sen. Lyman Hoffman, Sen. Hollis French, Sen. Gretchen Guess, Sen. Georgianna Lincoln, Sen. Donny Olson, Rep. Ethan Berkowitz, Rep. Sharon Cissna, Rep. Harry Crawford, Rep. Eric Croft, Rep. Les Gara, Rep. Max Gruenberg, Rep. David Guttenberg, Rep. Reggie Joule, Rep. Mary Kapsner, Rep. Beth Kerttula, Rep. Albert Kookesh, Rep. Carl Moses