



Alaska State Legislature

Reps. Crawford, Croft, Guttenberg, and Gara

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Campaign Finance and Election Initiatives Filed

***Ballot initiatives filed to restore campaign finance laws...
and to fill U.S. Senate vacancy by election, not appointment***

ANCHORAGE – Two initiative petitions were submitted to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor to restore and protect the integrity of Alaska's elections. The first initiative restores the campaign finance limits and lobbyist reporting requirements eroded by recent legislative action. The second initiative requires that a vacancy in the U.S. Senate be filled by special election, as is currently the law for vacancies in the U.S. House of Representatives. The initiative petitions were submitted by Representatives Harry Crawford, Eric Croft, David Guttenberg, and Les Gara.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM, AGAIN

The contribution limits and lobbyist registration requirements were originally enacted as a result of the 1996 citizen initiative on campaign finance reform. During this legislative session, bills were passed that doubled the allowable contributions to political campaigns and greatly reduced the number of lobbyists that must report their activities.

Senate Bill 119 by Governor Murkowski doubled the amounts individuals can give to campaigns from \$500 to \$1000, doubled the amount individuals can give to political parties from \$5,000 to \$10,000, and raised the amounts that groups can give to each other. When the Legislature doubled the contribution limits, it essentially doubled the influence special interests have over political campaigns and our elected officials. The initiative restores the original limits.

Under regulations enacted after the 1996 campaign finance laws, a person who lobbies the Alaska Legislature for more than four hours in a month was required to register and could only make political contributions to officeholders in the lobbyists home district. These rules protected the public's right to know who was influencing their elected officials and limited the influence lobbyists could have over political campaigns. Senate Bill 89 by Senator Ralph Seekins (R-Fairbanks) allowed lobbyists to avoid registration and campaign limits even if they engaged in active lobbying for 40 hours per month. The initiative petition establishes a 10-hour per month standard in statute.

DIRECT ELECTION OF U.S. SENATORS

In Alaska, vacancies in the U.S. House of Representatives are filled by special election unless the vacancy occurs within 60 days of the next primary election, while vacancies in the U.S. Senate are filled

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only by appointment of the Governor. When Governor Murkowski was able to appoint his own successor, this difference was highlighted. The initiative petition adopts the special election model used for the U.S. House seat and preserves the right of Alaskans to have a say on who speaks for them in the US Senate.

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