

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

August 20, 2003

Attorney General Gregg Renkes  
Fax: 465-2075

Dear Gregg:

I am writing to bring an important public policy matter to your attention. On August 12, 2003, the recently filed campaign finance reform initiative was referred to your office for a standard legal review. Your office is holding the initiative, apparently to determine whether it is constitutional. In fairness to you, it may be you are unaware that there is binding legal authority confirming the validity of the provisions in the initiative. I am therefore writing to inform you of the binding legal authority. Accordingly, there is no reason for the petition to be held by attorneys at your office. I and the initiative sponsors, Reps. Croft, Crawford and Guttenberg, are asking that you authorize your office to release the petition back to the Lt. Governor's Office immediately so that supporters of the initiative can begin to collect signatures at the State Fair to place the initiative on the November, 2004 ballot.

In 1999 the Alaska Supreme Court reviewed and upheld Alaska's 1997 Campaign Finance Reform law. 978 P.2d 597 (Alaska 1999). This year the Governor and majority in the Legislature overturned much of that law, and increased Alaska's campaign donation limits. The pending petition seeks to reinstate the limits of the 1997 law. Last week the Ninth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals again issued an opinion echoing the sentiments that the state has a right to limit campaign donations, and the influence of money in politics. Given that the petition's provisions are clearly constitutional, no further legal review is needed by your office.

Once your office returns the initiative petition to the Lt. Governor's Office, the Division of Elections can print the booklets needed so supporters of the initiative can obtain voter signatures. The State Fair begins this week, and it will take roughly 20,000 signatures by January to get this initiative on the November, 2004 ballot. That's a lot of work, and supporters of these initiatives cannot obtain signatures to place the initiative on the ballot until your legal review is completed, and the Division of Elections then prints the signature books. The latter task historically takes roughly a week or less (that was the case under the Knowles Administration). It is up to your office whether signatures can be gathered at the State Fair. Thank you for your attention. Please call with any questions.

Sincerely,

Les Gara