

2020 Ballot Measure Number 2 Implementation

FY2022 Request: \$803,600

Reference No: AMD 63320

AP/AL: Appropriation

Project Type: Information Technology / Systems / Communication

Category: General Government

Location: Statewide

House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)

Impact House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)

Contact: Gail Fenumiai, Elections Director

Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2021 - 06/30/2023

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Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

Compliance with Ballot Measure 2, the Alaska Better Elections Initiative (AKBE), establishes ranked-choice voting for the general election. To implement these new provisions, the Division of Elections requests funding for a new ballot tabulation module, election management software modifications, voter education, and other costs to ensure full implementation for the 2022 elections cycle.

Funding:	<u>FY2022</u>	<u>FY2023</u>	<u>FY2024</u>	<u>FY2025</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>Total</u>
1004 Gen Fund	\$803,600						\$803,600
Total:	\$803,600	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$803,600

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	0
Totals:	0	0

Prior Funding History / Additional Information:

Project Description/Justification:

AKBE eliminates the party primary system, and political parties will no longer select their candidates to appear on the general election ballot. Instead, this act creates an open nonpartisan primary where all candidates will appear on one ballot. Candidates can choose to have a political party preference listed next to their name or be listed as “undeclared” or “nonpartisan.” The four candidates with the most votes in the primary election will have their names placed on the general election ballot.

AKBE establishes ranked-choice voting for the general election. Voters will have the option to “rank” candidates in order of choice. Voters will rank their first-choice candidate as “1,” second choice candidate as “2,” and so on. Voters “1” choice will be counted first. If no candidate receives a majority after counting the first-ranked votes, then the candidate with the least amount of “1” votes will be removed from counting. Those ballots that ranked the removed candidate as “1” will then be counted for the voters’ “2” ranked candidate. This process will repeat until one candidate receives a majority of the remaining votes. If voters still want to choose only one candidate, they can.

To implement these new provisions through the first election cycle, the Division of Elections requests funding for the following:

- **Ballot Tabulation Equipment:** In order to accommodate rank choice voting, the Division would need to purchase 137 ballot tabulators for precincts that currently hand count ballots. Rank choice voting does not allow for the hand counting of ballots. All ballots must first be scanned and counted by a tabulator for the tabulation grid to be captured. A rank choice voting tabulation module will also be purchased and integrated into the Ballot and Tabulation System.
- **Election Software Modifications:** The Voter Registration & Election Management System (VREMS) will need to be modified to adjust the way candidates are managed in the system for rank choice voting. Software coding changes will need to be programmed in the VREMS candidate module to adjust to the new structure. The election results reporting module will also need to be modified to explain the complex election results to the public.
- **Additional Maintenance & Licensing:** The additional 137 ballot tabulators will be subject to an annual licensing and maintenance fee.
- **Protective Cases for Tabulation Equipment:** Required for safe, secure shipping of ballot tabulation equipment throughout the state during an election.
- **Public Education Campaign:** A public education campaign will need to take place to inform candidates, voters, and election workers of the changes to the primary and general election processes.
- **Language Assistance:** Translation of public educational materials into 11 languages required by the Toyukak Settlement and Section 203 of the Federal Voting Rights Act.
- **Staff Training:** Regional managers and assistants will need to receive updated training on the ballot tabulators to adjust to the new method of entering voting results.
- **Project Specialist:** The implementation of rank choice voting will need to follow a strict timeline planning regulation updates, procuring and executing the implementation of a new voting structure in Alaska. The new requirement will need to be organized into phases to execute the changes to the new voting structure and will require administrative support from the election systems manager and analyst.
- **Regulation Review:** For legal services provided by the Department of Law to the Division, reviewing the administrative regulations prepared for rank choice voting.