

**CITY OF HOMER
HOMER, ALASKA**

Aderhold

RESOLUTION 24-017

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA OPPOSING AND PROVIDING COMMENTS ON ALASKA STATE HOUSE BILL 250, TITLED “AN ACT RELATING TO MUNICIPAL AND SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS; DECLARING ELECTION DAY A HOLIDAY; RELATING TO TERMS OF OFFICE FOR MUNICIPAL MAYORS, MUNICIPAL GOVERNING BODIES, ELECTED UTILITY BOARDS, AND SCHOOL BOARDS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE”

WHEREAS, The Alaska House of Representatives introduced House Bill (HB) 250 on January 16, 2024 and referred the bill to the Community and Regional Affairs and State Affairs committees; and

WHEREAS, HB250 would, among other things, amend Alaska Statute (AS) Title 29 in the following ways:

1. Require municipalities to hold regular elections on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each even-numbered year,
2. Require municipal elected officials to have four-year terms,
3. Further prescribe how municipalities hold special elections in response to a petition, and
4. Remove the ability of a municipality to select an election date that works best for a community and change the term of office for elected officials; and

WHEREAS, HB250 would make the Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each even numbered year a holiday known as Election Day; and

WHEREAS, HB250 prescribes a transition to the new system in which the municipal mayor and all members of the municipal governing body would be voted on during an election held on November 3, 2026; and

WHEREAS, Alaska’s constitution, Article 10 – Local Government, begins by stating “The purpose of the article is to provide for maximum local self-government ... A liberal construction shall be given to the powers of local government units.”; and

WHEREAS, AS 15.15.100 stipulates that qualified voters be given time off to vote in state elections if they do not have sufficient time outside working hours to vote; and

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WHEREAS, Within the State of Alaska, state and federal races are partisan and municipal elections (boroughs and cities) are nonpartisan; and

WHEREAS, The City of Homer is a first class city within the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) with an elected mayor holding a two-year term and six city council members holding three-year terms; and

WHEREAS, The City of Homer coordinates elections with the KPB; and

WHEREAS, While state and municipal elections may be held on the same day and at the same locations, they would continue to be separate elections requiring separate election workers and voting equipment; and

WHEREAS, Many election workers are employed by the state and the boroughs/cities to conduct elections, the KPB hires approximately 300 poll workers each year, and if state and KPB elections were held on the same day, approximately 600 poll workers would be needed; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, election workers have been difficult to hire; and

WHEREAS, Voting locations in the City of Homer may be space constrained if three elections (state, borough, city) were held simultaneously; and

WHEREAS, For the City of Homer, the current municipal pattern of elections, with annual elections and three-year terms of office for council members, results in two council seats up for election each year, meaning that the maximum change in council members is one-third (two) of the seats and allows for gradual transition of the city council from year to year and time for new council members to learn from more experienced colleagues gaining understanding and knowledge of municipal governance; and

WHEREAS, The proposed four-year terms and elections every other year would mean that half of the council could change in one year, which could be disruptive to city policy making and the functioning; and

WHEREAS, Holidays cost municipalities money in overtime costs for certain employees (e.g., police officers, municipal clerks) who are required to work those days; and

WHEREAS, The transition election stipulated in HB250 on November 3, 2026 would have several ramifications for the City of Homer:

- 83 • Because city council members run for at-large seats, the number of individuals running
84 for six seats could be large and it could be difficult for any one candidate to receive the
85 required percentage of votes required by city code to be elected to office,
86 • The mayor and all council seats could turnover in one election cycle, leading to a
87 significant disruption in local governance and the effective delivery of services to the
88 public.

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90 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Homer, Alaska, opposes
91 HB250.

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93 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Homer City Council provides the following
94 comments:

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96 • HB250 removes important local control in the conduct of municipal elections.
97 Municipalities should maintain the ability to decide when it is best to hold local
98 elections based on their constituencies and needs.

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99 • HB250 removes important local control in determining the terms of office for municipal
100 elected officials. The City of Homer passed an ordinance that the mayor is elected every
101 two years; municipalities should continue to make these decisions locally.

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102 • AS 15.15.100 currently pertains to providing time off for state elections. This statute
103 could be amended to include similar provisions for municipal elections instead of
104 establishing a new state holiday.

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105 • Most municipal elections are nonpartisan. Holding a partisan state election with a
106 nonpartisan municipal election could inadvertently increase the partisanship of
107 municipal elections and change the way municipal elected bodies work together on
108 municipal policy issues.

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109 • We ask legislators to consider the state and municipal fiscal impacts of making the state
110 regular election day a holiday. Legislators should also consider whether state primary
111 election day should be a holiday.

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112 • We ask legislators to consider the ramifications of holding two (or three in the case of
113 the City of Homer and many other cities within organized boroughs) elections
114 simultaneously. Election workers are already difficult to find, and many election
115 workers work for the municipalities and the state, making it potentially difficult for both
116 the state and municipalities to hire enough people to successfully run elections.

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117 • Currently, there is one vendor in the State of Alaska certified to print ballots. While this
118 vendor has told the Homer City Council that they have the capacity to print state and
119 municipal ballots for elections on the same day, longer lead times for printing may be
120 necessary and if an error in a state ballot occurs (this has happened, based on a decision
121 by a Lieutenant Governor), all other printing would stop until the error is corrected. This
122 could lead to some municipalities not receiving ballots in time for an election.


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123 • The potential turnover of half (or full, in the case of the transition election) of city
124 council members and the mayor in one election could be highly disruptive to the
 functioning of municipal governments.

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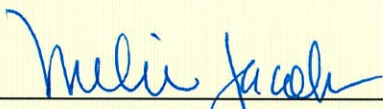
PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA, THIS 12th day of
February 2024.

CITY OF HOMER



KEN CASTNER, MAYOR

ATTEST:



MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK

Fiscal Note: N/A

