



RESOLUTION 2023-1

**Encouraging the Alaska Division of Elections to
Expand the Available Languages on the Touch Screen Voting Units**

WHEREAS, the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights is the State of Alaska’s civil rights enforcement agency charged with enforcing the Alaska Human Rights Act, AS 18.80 *et seq.*, as mandated by Article I, Section 3, of the Alaska Constitution; and,

WHEREAS, Congress declared in Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, codified at 52 U.S.C. § 10503, that it is necessary to eliminate discrimination against citizens of language minorities by prohibiting voting practices that exclude these citizens; and,

WHEREAS, AS 18.80.255 makes it unlawful for the state “to refuse, withhold from, or deny to a person any local, state, or federal funds, services, goods, facilities, advantages, or privileges because of race, religion, sex, color, or national origin;” and,

WHEREAS, requiring a particular language or prohibiting a particular language can be a form of racial discrimination and/or national origin discrimination; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska, Division of Elections, settled a lawsuit in 2010 that resulted in bilingual election poll and outreach workers, followed by a subsequent lawsuit and settlement in 2015 that required a comprehensive language assistance program including the use of touch screen voting machines, which was extended following the 2020 election; and,

WHEREAS, federal observers found what appeared to be continued violations of the Voting Rights Act during the August 2022 election, including a polling place without bilingual language workers and election officials who lacked training in assisting voters with languages other than English; and,

WHEREAS, the Alaska Division of Elections produces elections materials in Spanish, Tagalog, six dialects of Yup’ik, Gwich’in, Northern Inupiaq, Nunivak Cup’ig, and Aleut; and,

WHEREAS, the Alaska Division of Elections acquired touch screen voting units circa 2005 oriented for use by the blind and visually impaired for use in precincts throughout the state that

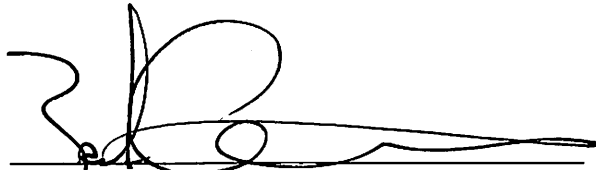
can accommodate up to nine languages and are programmed in Yup'ik, Inupiaq, Koyukon, Gwich'in, Spanish, and Tagalog, depending on location, in addition to English; and,

WHEREAS, according to the statement of Julie Kitka, President of the Alaska Federation of Natives, to the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on October 27, 2021, during the 2018 election 60% of village precincts lacked voting machines with audio translations; and,

WHEREAS, according to the Director of Get Out the Native Vote, Alaskans are likely unaware that the touch screen voting units have any languages other than English and the Division of Elections could do more to promote the value and utilization of the language features incorporated into the touch screen voting units at remote precincts, especially ones that are understaffed or manned by a substitute poll worker,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights encourages the Alaska Division of Elections to expand the number of languages offered at polling locations throughout Alaska by fully utilizing the features of the touch screen voting units, and promote the use of the touch screen voting units not only as an accommodation for the blind and visually impaired, but also for Alaskans with limited English proficiency, as a way for all Alaskans to participate equally in exercising their fundamental right to vote.

ADOPTED in Juneau, Alaska, this 22nd day of February, 2023.

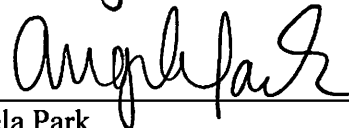


Zackary Gottshall

Chairperson

Alaska State Commission for Human Rights

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution 2023-01 is a true and accurate copy of the language adopted by the Commission on February 22, 2023.



Angela Park

Secretary

Alaska State Commission for Human Rights