



Alaska

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Forrest Dunbar, Chair  
Anchorage Assembly  
*by email:* [testimony@muni.org](mailto:testimony@muni.org)

**Re: Expansion of the Municipal Clerk's Emergency Powers**

Dear Chair Dunbar:

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Alaska thanks you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Anchorage Ordinance 2020-33, which would expand the emergency powers of the Municipal Clerk.

As government takes the necessary steps to ensure public health in this current pandemic, it must also safeguard people's civil rights and liberties. No one should have to choose between protecting their health and exercising their right to vote.

The ACLU of Alaska appreciates the additional flexibility this ordinance would give to the Municipal Clerk to expand voting access in emergencies, such as by accepting applications to vote at temporary addresses, allowing for electronic voting, and for special needs voting (page 1, lines 28-30).

The decisions that government makes that could restrict access to voting in times of public health emergency, however, should never be made lightly, and must always be scientifically justified, guided by the advice of public health experts. AO 2020-33 would enable the municipal clerk to close sites where people vote or drop off completed ballots (including polling locations, accessible vote centers, and ballot drop boxes), either temporarily or permanently, and without replacing those sites. Recognizing that, in our municipal vote-by-mail system, those who vote in person include some of the most vulnerable Anchorage residents, including those without a permanent home address, this provision raises concerns. **With respect to the power to close or relocate locations for voting or ballot drop-off, therefore, we urge you to amend the ordinance to reflect that closure should only happen in public health emergency, and that in a public health emergency, decisions to close or relocate these locations be made with the**

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**concurrence of the municipality's medical officer or another public health authority.**

In addition, while it is outside the scope of this ordinance, we ask you to help ensure the Municipal Clerk's office has the resources to take appropriate measures to safeguard the health and safety of pollworkers, elections officials, and voters who seek to cast their ballots in person.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our feedback on AO 2020-33. We appreciate the Assembly's forethought to protecting voting rights in the current pandemic.

Sincerely,



Triada Stampas  
Policy Director

cc: Members of the Anchorage Assembly