

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 29

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI

Introduced: 2/24/14

Referred: State Affairs

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the President of the United States and the United States Congress to amend and**
2 **update the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.**

3 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 **WHEREAS** the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States ensures
5 that the right of citizens of the United States to vote is not denied on account of race or color;
6 and

7 **WHEREAS** the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States grants
8 the United States Congress the authority to protect the right to vote; and

9 **WHEREAS** the United States Congress has exercised its authority to protect the right
10 to vote by passing landmark legislation of the civil rights era known as the Voting Rights Act
11 of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 1971 et seq.); and

12 **WHEREAS** secs. 4 and 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 have contributed to the
13 immense progress in protecting each citizen's right to vote over the past few decades by
14 ensuring that state and local election practices are just and fair; and

15 **WHEREAS** the Voting Rights Act was reauthorized in 2006 for 25 years with broad
16 bipartisan support, including a unanimous vote in the United States Senate; and

1 **WHEREAS** the late United States Senator Ted Stevens, United States Senator Lisa
2 Murkowski, and Congressman Don Young all voted in favor of reauthorizing the Act; and

3 **WHEREAS** the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has been an extremely important tool in
4 defending the right of voters in the state to just and fair access to the polls, including a 2011
5 decision by the United States Department of Justice preventing the state from eliminating
6 several voting precincts in rural Alaska, which would have forced voters in three small,
7 predominantly Native villages to travel up to 77 miles off the road system to exercise their
8 right to vote; and

9 **WHEREAS** the Supreme Court of the United States, in *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570
10 U.S. ____ (2013), recently held that the coverage formula in sec. 4 of the Voting Rights Act of
11 1965 is unconstitutional and can no longer be used as a basis for requiring certain jurisdictions
12 to subject their proposed changes in voting procedures to federal preclearance under sec. 5 of
13 the Act;

14 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
15 Congress and the President of the United States to enact amendments to the Voting Rights Act
16 of 1965 that would restore sec. 4 with a new coverage formula and update the entire Act in
17 order to address ongoing violations of voting rights in the states.

18 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack H. Obama, President
19 of the United States; Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-President of the United States and
20 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the U.S. House of
21 Representatives; the Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; and the
22 Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the
23 Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.