

Press Release
Alaskans for a Fair Minimum Wage

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House passes bogus bill to take Minimum Wage off ballot.

The Alaska House of Representatives, in a blatant political maneuver designed to deny Alaskans the opportunity to vote on the already approved voter initiative to raise the state's Minimum Wage, has passed HB 384 by a very close vote of 21-19 this evening.

The House Majority leadership introduced HB 384 through the Rules Committee on April 4, the 74th day of the 90 day session. The bill is, by design, similar to the initiative bill advanced by Alaskans for a Fair Minimum Wage and certified for the August 19 primary ballot by the lieutenant governor. Under Alaska law, if the legislature passes a bill "substantially similar" to an initiative, the measure is removed from the ballot.

"Any member who truly supports a meaningful and lasting improvement in the lives of hard working, low-income Alaskans voted no on this cynical ploy to thwart the will of the people," said initiative sponsor Ed Flanagan. "The House Majority has acted in bad faith in bringing forward this bill. Their goal is clearly to remove the bill from the

August ballot, where they believe it may influence the vote on the SB 21 referendum", said Flanagan.

Preemption of the vote would also set the stage for a repeat of what happened in 2003, when the legislature gutted a bill they had passed in 2002 to preempt an approved initiative by repealing the cost-of-living adjustment provision of the 2002 law. Had they let the law stand as passed in 2002, the minimum wage would be \$9.53 today rather than \$7.75 an hour. Representatives of low-wage industries have been in Juneau this year advocating for a similar move to moot the initiative so it can be gutted next year.

"Anyone who voted in favor of HB 384 is complicit in an attempt to perpetrate a fraud on the electorate and Alaskan workers," said Flanagan. "We are grateful to legislators who voted no because they support a minimum wage law that can't be gutted by the legislature for at least two years. And while we disagree with those who voted no because they do not support an increase, we respect their refusal to join in the charade this bill represents."

Members of Senate leadership have expressed reluctance to take up HB 384. "We hope the Senate will continue to see this bill for what it is, and let Alaskans vote," said Flanagan.