

M U N I C I P A L C L E R K ' S O F F I C E



Anchorage
 **VOTES**
by Mail

VOTE BY MAIL PROJECT



www.muni.org/elections

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about Municipality of Anchorage elections, please visit the MOA Elections website at muni.org/elections.

You may also email elections@muni.org, call 907-243-VOTE (8683), or visit City Hall: 632 West 6th Avenue, Suite 250 • Anchorage, Alaska 99501

or visit MOA Election Center (January- April):
619 East Ship Creek Avenue, Door D • Anchorage, Alaska 99501

State of Alaska Voter Registration

Register to Vote:

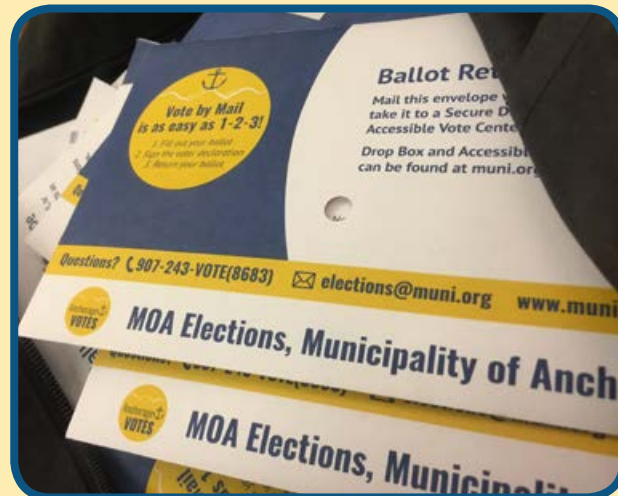
<https://voterregistration.alaska.gov/>

Review your Voter Registration:

<https://myvoterinformation.alaska.gov/>

Update your Voter Registration:

<https://voterregistration.alaska.gov/>



Municipal Clerk's Office Social Media

 [@MunicipalClerksOffice](https://www.facebook.com/MunicipalClerksOffice)

 [@AncMuniClerk](https://twitter.com/AncMuniClerk)

 [@anc_muni_clerk](https://www.instagram.com/anc_muni_clerk)

TABLE OF CONTENTS:



Assembly Members and Staff	4
Executive Summary	5
Legislation	6
Collaboration with the State of Alaska	7
Geographic Information Services – GIS	8
Collaboration with the United States Postal Service	9
Project and Operations Expenses	10
How Vote By Mail Works	11
Secure Drop Boxes.	12
Accessible Vote Centers.	14
MOA Election Center	16
Election Workers	18
Community Education and Outreach	20
Results	22
Vision	23

ASSEMBLY MEMBERS AND STAFF

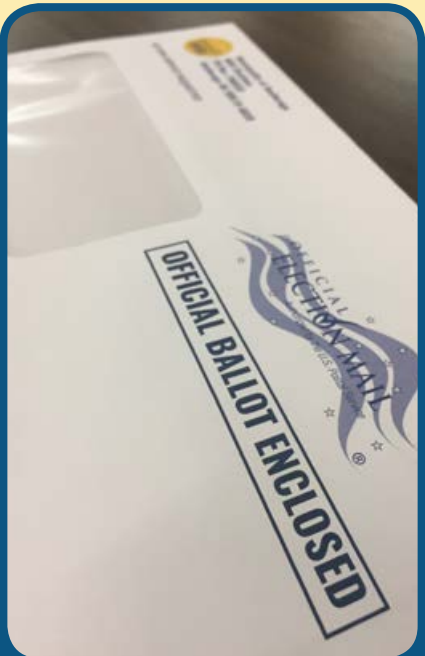
2018 Anchorage Assembly	2019 Anchorage Assembly
Forrest Dunbar, Chair	Eric Croft, Chair
Eric Croft, Vice Chair	Felix Rivera, Vice Chair
Dick Traini, Vice Chair	Christopher Constant
Christopher Constant	Fred Dyson
Fred Dyson	Gretchen Wehmhoff
Amy Demboski	Austin Quinn-Davidson
Tim Steele	Dick Traini
Austin Quinn-Davidson	Forrest Dunbar
Felix Rivera	Pete Petersen
Pete Petersen	Suzanne LaFrance
Suzanne LaFrance	John Weddleton
John Weddleton	

2015-2018 Executive Steering Committee
Elvi Gray-Jackson
Dick Traini
Ernie Hall
Pete Petersen

2018 Assembly Ethics and Elections Committee
Pete Peterson, Chair
Eric Croft
Forrest Dunbar
Dick Traini

Municipal Clerk's Office Election Team
Barbara A. Jones
Amy Solberg
Anna Campione
Carolyn Hall
Cindy Hawkins
Amanda Moser
Jacqueline Yeagle

Project Management
Dennis Wheeler, Project Manager Resource Data, Inc
Kami Fitch, Senior Business Analyst Resource Data, Inc



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For decades, Anchorage Municipal Elections suffered from low voter turnout. Historically, Anchorage conducted traditional poll-based elections, with more than 120 polling locations across the Municipality. In an effort to increase the public engagement and voter turnout, in 2015, the Anchorage Assembly directed the Municipal Clerk's Office to explore alternative voting options. Other challenges the Municipal Clerk's Office faced included replacing retiring election workers, aging election equipment, lack of suitable space, security concerns, and strain on the community resources necessary to run poll-based elections.

The Municipal Clerk's Office created a Stakeholder Group to involve the public in the discussion of Vote by Mail. The Stakeholder Group included about a dozen people representing a diverse group of Anchorage citizens. Over time, the Stakeholder Group grew to more than 50 members.

After extensive research of Vote by Mail elections in other jurisdictions and considering stakeholder

input, the Anchorage Assembly determined that Vote by Mail elections could increase voter participation and save community resources. In response, the Anchorage Assembly Ethics and Elections Committee authorized the Municipal Clerk's Office to further explore voting by mail.

The Vote by Mail project began in earnest, building on a foundation of community involvement and engagement. Over the next three years, the Municipal Clerk's Office, and the Anchorage Assembly accomplished the following:

- updated the Municipal Code to reflect the coming changes to location elections;
- found a functional, secure space to administer elections;
- collaborated with the State of Alaska for voter information;
- purchased equipment and software to handle the new technology;
- trained a new workforce to administer Vote by Mail;
- conducted a comprehensive community outreach campaign;
- and more.

The hard work paid off. In 2018, the Municipal Clerk's Office administered the inaugural Vote by Mail election. An historic number of voters participated in the election, with 79,295 ballots cast.



LEGISLATION

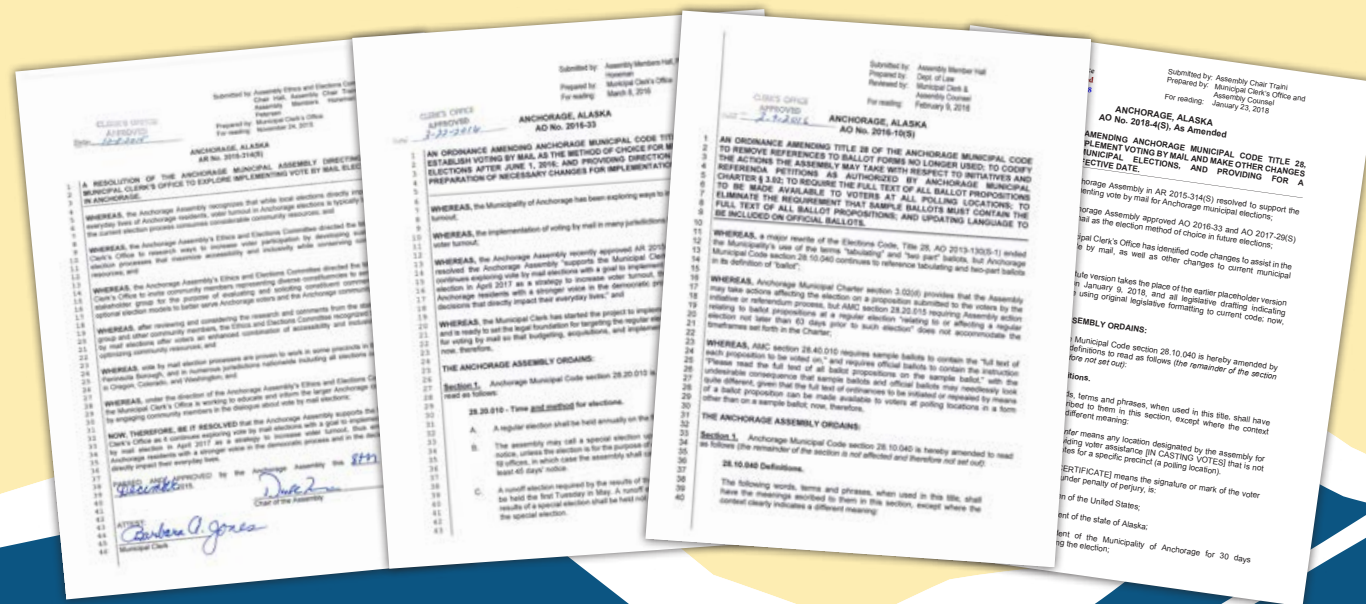
In 2015, the Anchorage Assembly Ethics and Elections Committee asked the Municipal Clerk's Office to find ways to increase voter participation and to save community resources. After a lot of research and review through the community Stakeholder Group, the Clerk's Office shared the results with the Ethics and Elections Committee. The Committee recommended the Assembly adopt a new voting system to deliver ballots by mail to all registered voters. In 2016, the Anchorage Assembly approved a resolution

to establish Vote by Mail as the preferred way to vote. The resolution stated Vote by Mail was "...a strategy to increase voter turnout, thus empowering Anchorage residents with a stronger voice in the democratic process and in the decisions that directly impact their everyday lives...." AO 2016-33.

Preparations for the inaugural Vote by Mail election began right away. Preparations included budgeting, acquisitions, and a number of updates to the Anchorage Municipal Code.



Anchorage Assembly in Chambers at the ZJ Loussac Library



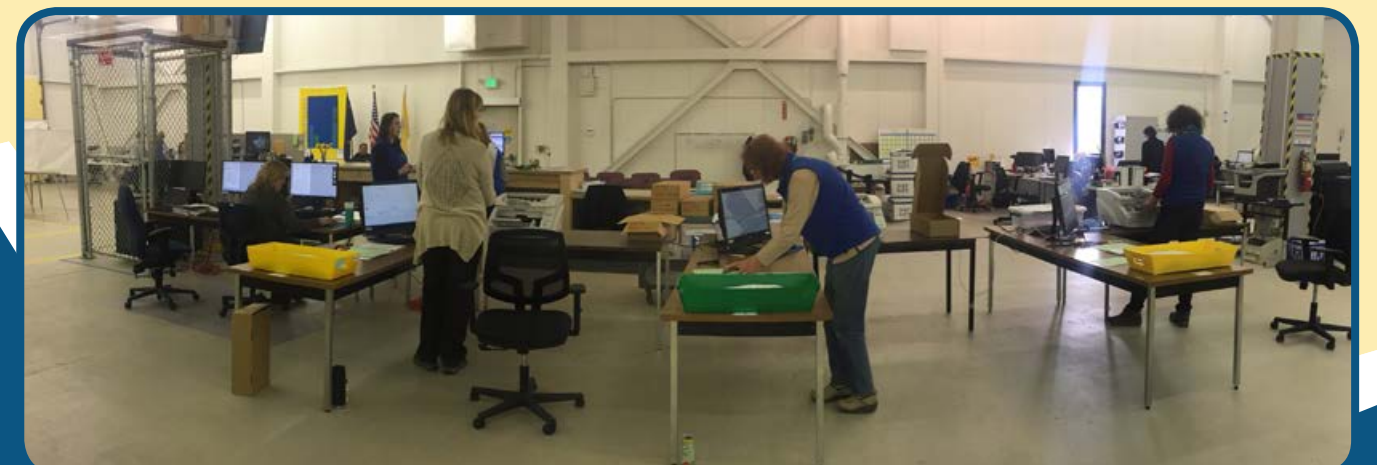
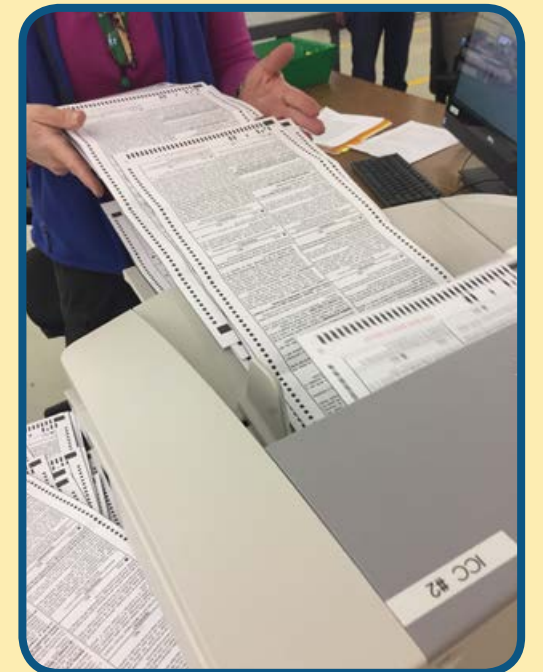
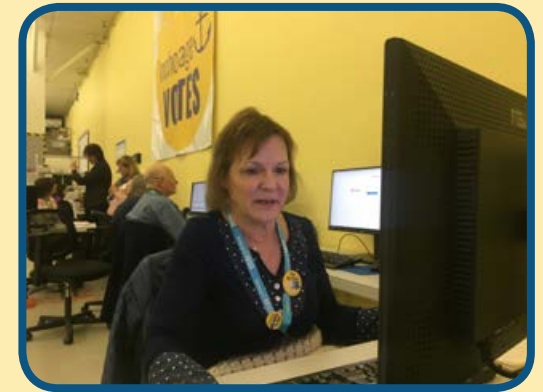
COLLABORATION WITH THE STATE OF ALASKA



The State of Alaska Division of Elections maintains the voter registration database. The Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) relies on state records from this database to confirm voter eligibility and to assign the correct ballot style. In a Vote by Mail election, accurate information is critical because qualified registered voters receive their ballots in the mail approximately three weeks before Election Day. Voter data, such as names, addresses, and signatures, must be up to date prior to the ballot package mail-out.

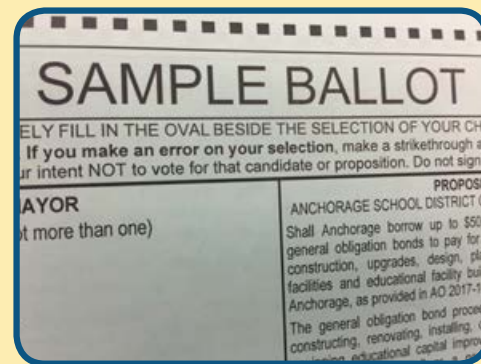
The Lieutenant Governor and the State of Alaska Division of Elections supported the Anchorage Assembly and the Municipal Clerk's Office Vote by Mail efforts in the following ways:

- Members of the State of Alaska Division of Elections staff were early participants in the Stakeholder Group and during the research and Request for Proposal phases.
- Division of Elections Region II Office (Anchorage area) staff securely shared and digitized voter signatures for ballot return envelope voter verification and worked at the MOA Election Center during the 2018 inaugural Vote by Mail election.
- The State of Alaska and the Municipal Clerk's Office collaborated to find opportunities to reduce costs & increase efficiencies.



GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SERVICES – GIS

Anchorage Municipal voters receive a specific ballot based on their residence address. For this reason, it is particularly important for voter records to contain accurate residence addresses. Since Municipal elections include a number of service areas, such as the Anchorage Fire Service Area that may tax voters differently than voters who do not receive fire services, the Municipal Clerk's Office and the MOA GIS team worked together to match voter residence addresses within the different service areas. This matching process ensures that the voter receives the correct ballot for the races, issues and taxes applicable to that voter.



In preparation for the inaugural Vote by Mail election, GIS also conducted preliminary work to correct and update Anchorage residence address records and created an "Elections and Government" map gallery with a number of online maps. Several featured maps include the "Secure Drop Box and Accessible Vote Center Map," where voters can find the locations of the twelve drop boxes and five Accessible Vote Centers; and the "Sample Ballot Style Map," where voters can enter their address and review the sample ballot for their residence address.

COLLABORATION WITH THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



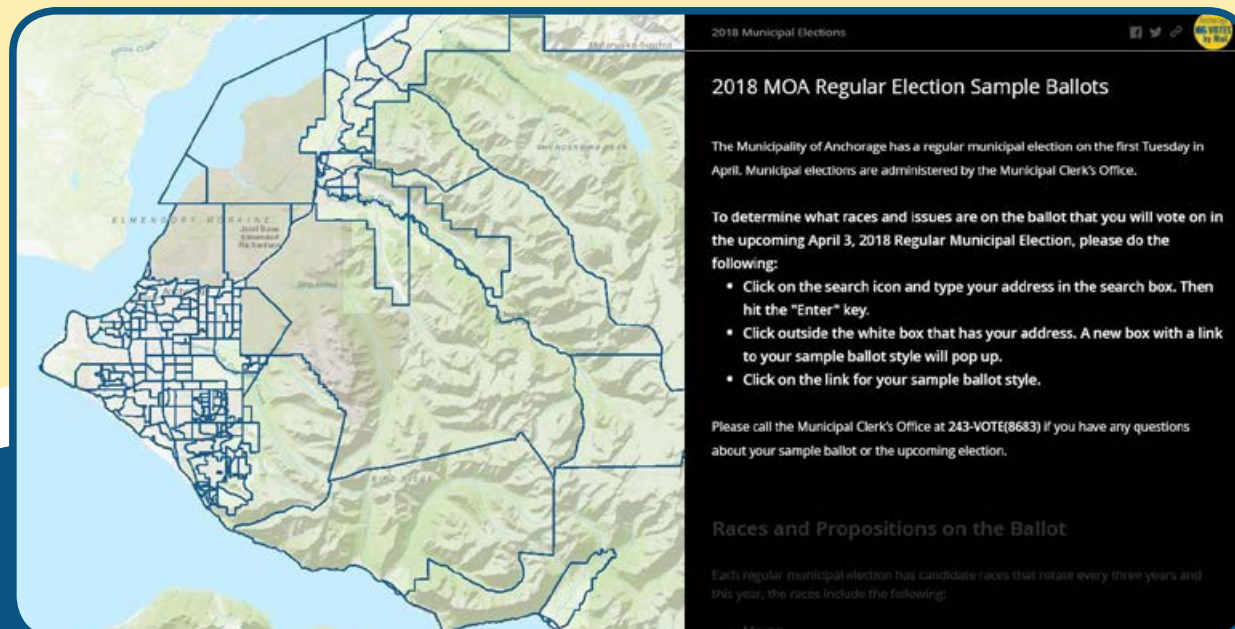
As the name would suggest, a successful Vote by Mail election framework requires significant collaboration with the United States Postal Service. The Municipal Clerk's Office invited USPS representatives to meet with the Vote by Mail Project Team.

The representatives were loyal attendees at all Stakeholder Group meetings and were essential to the success of the first Vote by Mail election.

The Postal Service helped the Municipal Clerk's Office coordinate the following:

- Mail pick up at the main post office;
- Guidance and approval of official ballot package envelopes that meet USPS standards;
- Authorize use of the official election logo on mailed election material;
- Postcard and ballot package support during mail transit.

The Municipal Clerk's Office is appreciative of the Postal Service's delivery of 218,000 postcards and 194,000 ballot packages to qualified Anchorage voters.



PROJECT AND OPERATIONS EXPENSES

The Anchorage Assembly allocated funding for the Vote by Mail project and operational costs. The Anchorage Assembly budgeted \$1.28 million to the Vote by Mail project. As of December 31, 2018, the project cost \$1.14 million.

Traditional poll-based elections typically cost the Municipality of Anchorage between \$600,000 - \$700,000 in operational expenses. The inaugural Vote by Mail election in April 2018 cost \$944,000 in operational expenses. Part of the increased cost is largely due to the cost of printing, but also the Clerk's Office deliberately printed extra envelopes and ballots, and hired a high number of staff as safeguards for any unanticipated problems with its first Vote by Mail election. The Municipal Clerk's Office anticipates the cost per vote will drop as it refines and reduces its printing and staffing needs, based on its growing experience.



HOW VOTE BY MAIL WORKS

What is Vote by Mail?

Vote by Mail is an alternative to precinct-based voting in which official ballots are mailed to voters and returned for counting.

How does Vote by Mail work?

Ballot packages are mailed to all qualified registered voters 21 days before Election Day. Each ballot package contains a ballot, ballot return envelope, security envelope, and instructions.

Voters have the opportunity to learn about the issues on the ballot by using trusted resources.

Voters vote their choices, place the ballot into the security envelope, then place the ballot and security envelope into the ballot return envelope. Voters sign the declaration on the back of the ballot return envelope and return the package for processing.

There are three ways to return the ballot package:

1. Placing it in a Secure Drop Box by 8pm on Election Day.
2. Returning it to an Accessible Vote Center by 8pm on Election Day.
3. Mailing it using first class postage through the United States Postal Service, postmarked on or before Election Day.



Accessible Vote Center - O'Malley's on the Green

Voters may visit an Accessible Vote Center if they need assistance. Accessible Vote Centers function like the former absentee polling locations and provide voter services such as replacement ballots and voter assistance.



Secure Drop Box - Fairview Community Recreation Center

SECURE DROP BOXES

Typically, in Vote by Mail elections, all eligible voters receive ballot materials at their mailing address two to three weeks before Election Day and enjoy multiple options for returning their voted ballot materials. Those options include returning the ballots by mail, placing them in a Secure Drop Box, or returning them to an Accessible Vote Center.

A Secure Drop Box functions similar to a book return unit at a library or a Post Office mailbox, including unique design features that resist tampering and vandalism.

Election workers opened the Secure Drop Boxes on March 13, 2018 – the day of the ballot package mail-out. The boxes remained open 24/7 until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Stakeholders and other engaged community members assisted the Municipal Clerk's Office to identify Secure Drop Box sites for the 2018 inaugural Vote by Mail election. The group found twelve locations – two in each Assembly District – that considered the following criteria: good lighting, government property ownership, excellent vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow, and outdoor security cameras. The Clerk's Office secured permission from the following selected locations:

- Loussac Library
- Anchorage School District Education Center
- Bartlett High School
- Clark Middle School
- Dimond High School
- Fairview Community Recreation Center
- Service High School
- South Anchorage High School
- Spenard Community Recreation Center
- UAA Alaska Airlines Center
- Eagle River Town Center
- Girdwood Community Center



ACCESSIBLE VOTE CENTERS

An Accessible Vote Center (AVC) is a location for voters to obtain voter services. “Accessible” for the purpose of Anchorage Municipal Elections means the building is generally accessible to all and that all voters can receive voting assistance.

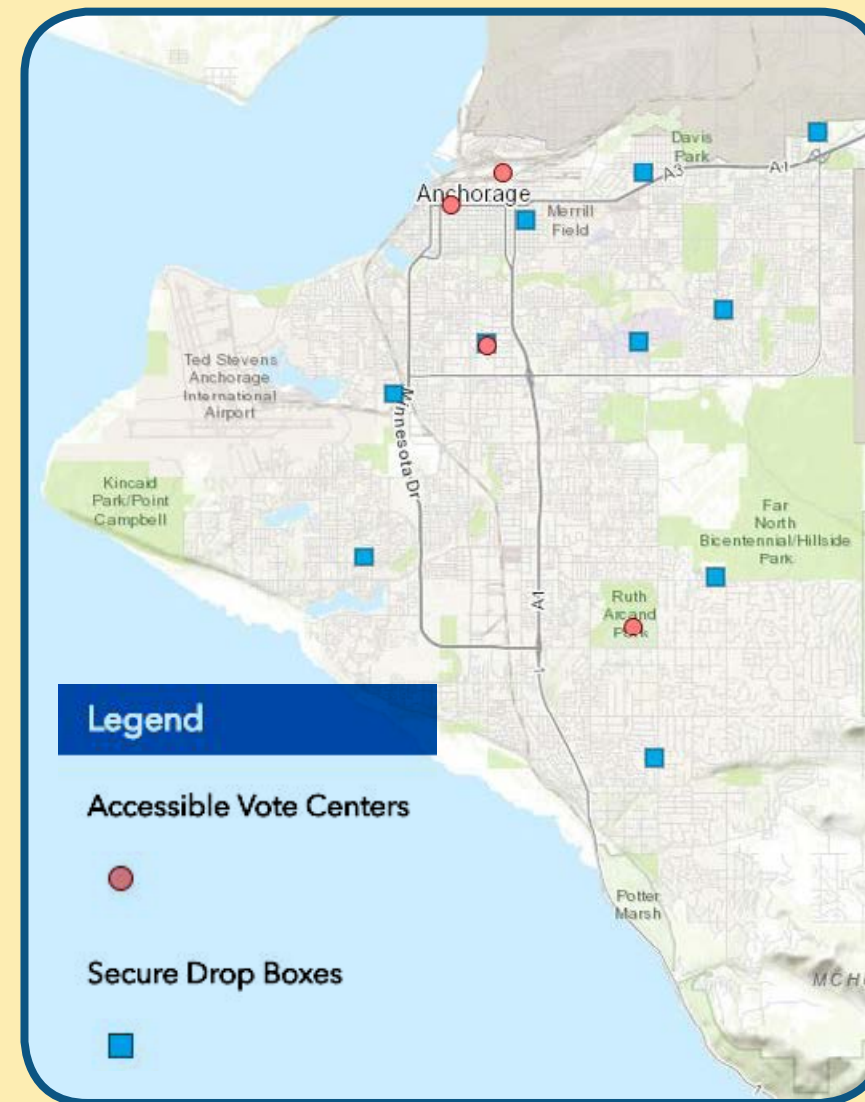
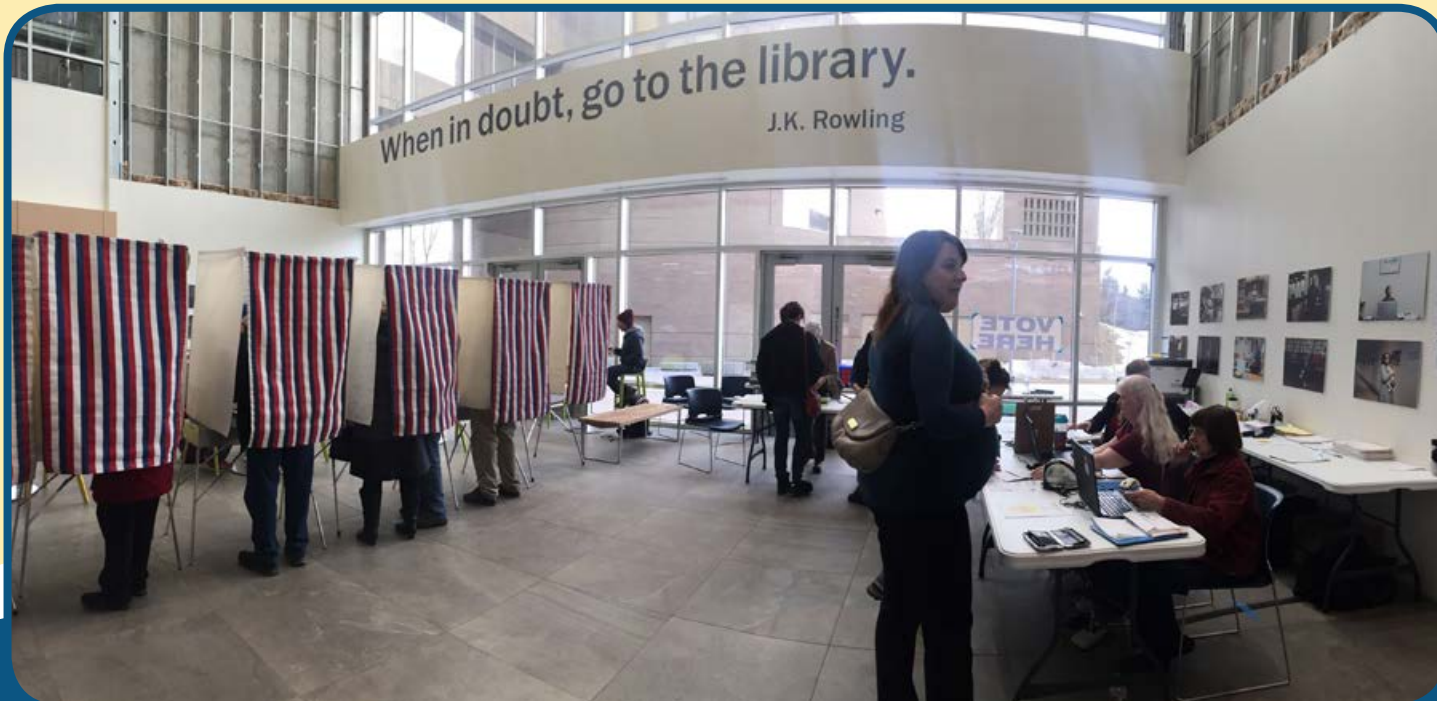
At Accessible Vote Centers, voters have the opportunity to:

- Return their mail ballot.
- Vote in-person if their ballot was lost, damaged, or if they did not receive a ballot package in the mail.
- Receive voting assistance.
- Access help for other voter questions.
- Register to vote.
- Vote a questioned or provisional ballot.

The original MOA Vote by Mail Election plan included four Accessible Vote Centers: Anchorage City Hall, ZJ Loussac Library, Eagle River Town Center, and the MOA Election Center.

In February 2018, community members requested a fifth AVC – at O’Malley’s on the Green golf course in South Anchorage.

Accessible Vote Centers (AVCs) opened on Monday, March 26, 2018, and closed at 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, April 3. The Loussac Library AVC opened for early voting, on March 23.



MOA ELECTION CENTER

As Anchorage grew over the last 40-plus years, MOA Elections outgrew its limited space at City Hall. With the addition of Vote by Mail technology, the Municipal Clerk's Office developed a list of attributes desired and initiated a search for a suitable location. Existing Municipality of Anchorage and Anchorage School District property inventory did not meet the requirements.

The VBM Project Team turned to the private sector and found a large warehouse in downtown Anchorage. The MOA Election Center is located at 619 East Ship Creek Avenue, Suite 100 at Door D. With 13,036 square feet of open floor and office space, there is enough room to accommodate all MOA election activity. In late 2016, the Anchorage Assembly signed a three-year lease for the space. The Election Center required some renovation, which began immediately, so it could be ready in time for the first Vote by Mail election.

The Election Center floorplan is designed with envelope, ballot security and voter privacy in mind. Between ballot processing phases, locked cages contain envelopes, ballots and any sensitive voter information. Only select supervisors have keys to gain

entry to the cages. The yellow markings on the Election Center floor indicate the "yellow brick road" for members of the public to tour the facility.

MOA Election Center security features include some of the following:

- Every person in the center wears a colored lanyard that indicates that person's level of access to the floor. For example, all election workers wear green lanyards, which indicates they have access to the floor at-large; whereas, members of the public wear yellow lanyards, which indicates they have access only to the "yellow brick road".
- Nine security cameras detect and record movement in ballot processing areas.
- Two election workers are present with ballots at all times during processing.
- Computers and servers that host sensitive data are air-gapped from the internet, meaning there is no wired or wireless internet access to the election systems or data. Internet is restricted to the staff work area.
- Locked cages protect servers and have limited access entry by election managers.
- To protect voter privacy, no cell phones are permitted on the Election Center floor.



Before



After



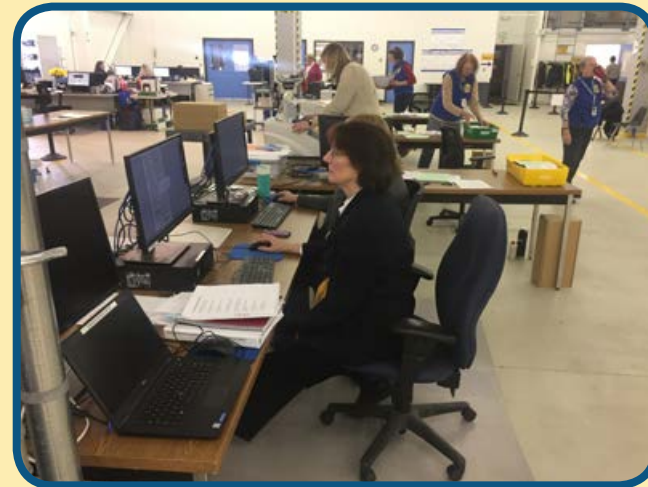
ELECTION WORKERS

Anchorage's poll-based elections required more than 600 temporary election workers. Year over year, the workforce historically suffered from high turnover, with a significant amount of time spent on recruiting and training. The inaugural Vote by Mail election workforce shrunk from 600-plus workers to about 60.

The Clerk's Office needed workers to staff the following areas: Call Center, reception, envelope sorter, signature verification, absentee or temporary address requests, electronic voting requests, Secure Drop Box pick-up, Accessible Vote Centers, USPS mail pick-up, and runners.

TRAINING

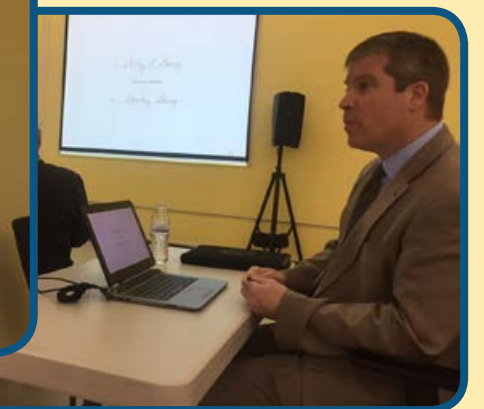
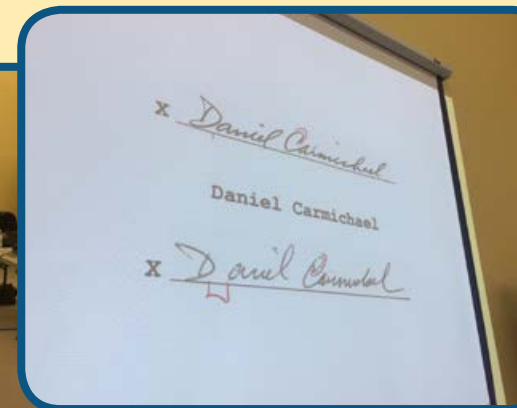
As with poll-based elections, Vote by Mail election workers sign an oath of office, must be trustworthy and have integrity. In addition, Vote by Mail election workers must be highly skilled in specific areas, such as databases and Microsoft Office. The Municipal Clerk's Office diligently focused on training the workers on new election software and procedures.



SIGNATURE VERIFICATION

As is the case in all Vote by Mail jurisdictions, MOA Elections depends on voter signatures to verify voter identity. In February 2018, a Washington State Patrol forensic scientist conducted a signature verification course for election workers.

Workers learned how to compare and weigh the significance of the differences between the



Above: Washington State Patrol forensic scientist Andy Szymanski trains MOA Election Workers in signature verification.

signature on the ballot return envelope with the reference signature(s) on file for each voter. Assembly legislation AO 2018-4(S), As Amended, describes specific guidelines for verifying signatures for Municipal elections.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The Municipal Clerk's Office convened an Elections Stakeholder Group that began meeting in the summer of 2015. The group provided valuable assistance and support in developing election processes intended to help increase voting activity among the members' constituent groups and the Anchorage community as a whole. Through the inaugural Vote by Mail election, the Stakeholder Group included more than 50 engaged members representing the below constituencies:



The Municipal Clerk's Office rolled out an intensive Vote by Mail public education campaign in January 2018 that included the following:

- paid media, such as paid public service announcements, mailed postcards, YouTube pre-roll ads and Facebook ad campaigns
- earned media, such as local news coverage, talk radio show appearances, and social media.
- in-person engagements, such as community presentations, Election Center tours, and tabling opportunities at public events.

Stakeholders	
Access Alaska	Food Bank of Alaska
AFL-CIO	GCI
Alaska Center	League of Women Voters Anchorage
Alaska Map Science	Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Election Workers
Alaska State Legislature	MOA GIS
Anchorage Assembly	MOA Office of Equal Opportunity
Anchorage Community Land Trust	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
Anchorage Economic Development Corporation	Office of the Governor
Anchorage Election Commission	Political consultants
Anchorage Faith and Action Congregations Together (AFACT)	State of Alaska, Division of Elections
Anchorage Mayor's Office	The Foraker Group
Anchorage School Board	United States Post Office
Disability Law Center	University of Alaska-Anchorage
First Alaskans Institute	and the Public

The goal was to ensure that every qualified, registered voter in Anchorage received the information the voter needed to cast a ballot in the April election. The main messages addressed:

- What is Vote by Mail?
- Is Vote by Mail secure?
- How do I Vote by Mail?
- Why did Anchorage switch to Vote by Mail?
- What is the deadline to return my ballot?



The Municipal Clerk's Office leveraged Municipal resources to help get the word out about the changes to local elections. The MOA Video Center and MOA Reprographics Department were critical to the education and outreach effort. The Video Center produced PSAs to air on local television stations and online. The Reprographics Department created fliers, posters, brochures and logos and provided printed materials in a timely manner.

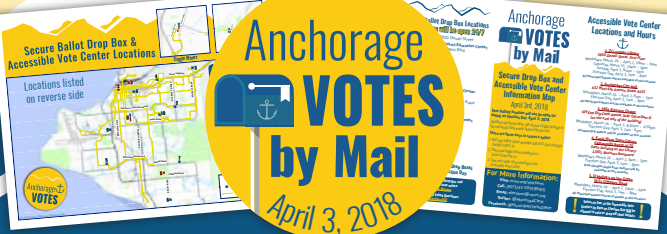
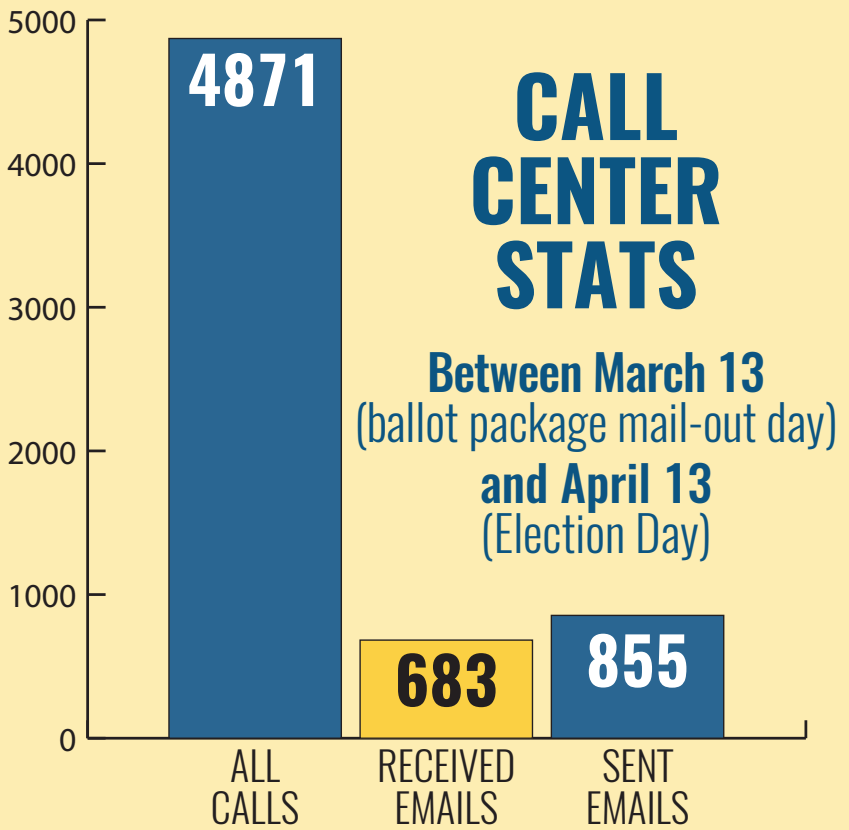
CALL CENTER – 907-243-VOTE (8683)

The southeast corner of the MOA Election Center hosts the Call Center, where election workers staff the Voter Hotline at 907-243-VOTE (8683) and respond to emails at elections@muni.org.

The primary responsibility of the Call Center is to provide telephone and e-mail assistance and support to voters. The Voter Hotline began taking calls in February 2018.

The Call Center answered calls Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with extended hours on and around Election Day to meet an anticipated increase in voter questions. Mornings proved particularly busy: approximately 31% of a day's calls were before 10:00 a.m. The Call Center adjusted staffing to meet the morning demand.

Outreach by the Numbers:	
Presentations: 39; approx. 1,300+ people	Facebook posts: 212
Tours: 10+; approx. 250 attendees	Tweets: 128
Digital Media Kit Recipients: approx. 150	YouTube plays, 30-second PSA: approx. 12,000
Tabling Events: 10; approx. 4,300 attendees	YouTube plays, 60-second PSA: approx. 360
Press Releases Issued: 16	Nextdoor posts: 7



RESULTS

April 3, 2018 Regular Municipal Election results and statistics:

- The Municipal Clerk’s Office mailed 194,507 ballot packages to qualified registered voters on March 13, 2018.
- The inaugural MOA Vote by Mail election drew a record-breaking voter turnout of 79,295 ballots cast in a Regular Municipal Election.
- The Municipal Clerk’s Office Election Signature Verification Team could not match 100 signatures, but reviewed and approved 79,295 signatures, which demonstrates an acceptance rate of 99.87%.
- The Municipal Clerk’s Office mailed approximately 779 “Opportunity to Cure” letters to voters to correct signature or other issues with their ballot return envelope. Most voters responded to the letters; ultimately, only 166 voters who received the letters had their ballot envelope rejected by the Election Commission.
- Total ballot envelopes rejected: 671; total ballot envelopes returned after the Public Session of Canvass: 30; Total ballot envelopes returned: 79,996.



Mayoral Election Year*	Ballots Cast	Voter Turnout (%)	Registered Voters
2018	79,295	36.31	218,388
2015	57,536	27.93	206,033
2012	71,099	35.82	198,512

*Voter turnout is typically higher in mayoral elections.

Ballot Envelopes Returned (%)				
Mail	Secure Drop Box	Accessible Vote Center	*Electronic Voting	**Senior Centers
46.7%	38.0%	14.8%	.3%	.1%

*Electronic Voting encompasses requests to vote by email, and by fax.
**Ballot boxes staffed by election workers were on-site at Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River Senior Centers on occasion around Election Day to assist elders with returning their ballots.

VISION



The Municipal Clerk’s Office believes in facilitating a well-informed and well-served community in order to maximize public participation in local government. The Clerk’s Office continues to refine the Vote by Mail process and election procedures to improve each voter’s experience and involvement in Municipal elections.



www.muni.org/elections


Vote by Mail
is as easy as 1-2-3!
1. Fill out your ballot
2. Sign the voter declaration
3. Return your ballot

Ballot Return Envelope

Mail this envelope with your voted ballot, or take it to a Secure Drop Box, or return it to an Accessible Vote Center.

Drop Box and Accessible Vote Center locations can be found at muni.org/elections/dropbox.

Questions? ☎ 907-243-VOTE(8683) ✉ elections@muni.org www.muni.org/elections

MOA Elections, Municipality of Anchorage

Municipal Clerk's Office Social Media



[@MunicipalClerksOffice](https://www.facebook.com/MunicipalClerksOffice)



[@AncMuniClerk](https://twitter.com/AncMuniClerk)



[@anc_muni_clerk](https://www.instagram.com/anc_muni_clerk)

State of Alaska Voter Registration

Register to Vote:

<https://voterregistration.alaska.gov/>

Review your Voter Registration:

<https://myvoterinformation.alaska.gov/>

Update your Voter Registration:

<https://voterregistration.alaska.gov/>

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about Municipality of Anchorage elections, please visit the MOA Elections website at muni.org/elections.

You may also email elections@muni.org, call 907-243-VOTE (8683), or visit **City Hall**: 632 West 6th Avenue, Suite 250 • Anchorage, Alaska 99501

or visit **MOA Election Center (January- April):**

619 East Ship Creek Avenue, Door D • Anchorage, Alaska 99501