

Alaskans for Better Government

Scott Kendall, Legal Counsel

*Presentation to Meet Alaska
March 18, 2022*



Alaskans for Better Government is a ballot initiative campaign to create an equal relationship between the State of Alaska and Tribes.



Situation

The federal government, Alaska court system, and executive branch all formally recognize the sovereignty of Alaska's 229 Native Tribes. *Alaska statute does not.*



Challenge

Without a statute creating a permanent relationship, the State has stalled on meaningfully addressing issues impacting all Alaskans and engaging with Native Tribes as equal partners.



Resolution

What is the best path forward to establishing recognition at the state level? What will meaningfully change as a result? What will stay the same?



State recognition of Tribes is a critical way to unlock Alaska's problem solving potential

- **POWERFUL SYMBOL:** This is an opportunity for Alaskans to come together and affirm our Alaska Native heritage
- **EXPAND PROBLEM SOLVING CAPACITY:** A government-to-government relationship will utilize the Tribes' knowledge of their regions for more effective policy-making on issues like education, homelessness, child welfare, and rural and public safety to benefit all Alaskans
- **REDUCE GOVERNMENT REDUNDANCY:** The State of Alaska has sued the Tribes more than any other state in the country - the consistent losses waste Alaskan taxpayer dollars
- **ACCESS NEW MONEY:** An equal partnership would allow the State and Tribes to leverage their status, infrastructure, and funds to generate millions for investment across Alaska



A wide-angle photograph of a mountain valley. In the foreground, a rocky path winds through low-lying vegetation with autumnal colors of yellow, orange, and red. The middle ground shows steep, grassy slopes leading to a valley floor. In the background, a range of rugged, snow-capped mountains rises against a sky filled with soft, white clouds. The overall scene is a natural, high-altitude landscape.

Recognizing Tribes is a matter of *respect*.

This initiative will not:

- Grant or alter Tribal or State sovereignty
- Create new legal authority or jurisdiction for Tribes or the State
- Change the federal government's relationship with Tribes or the State
- Create a Trust Responsibility between Tribes and the State





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March 26, 2021

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Alaska State Capitol
120 4th Street, Room 416
Juneau AK, 99801

Re: House Bill 123, State Recognition of Tribes

Dear Representative Zulkosky:

Thank you for reaching out regarding House Bill 123, State Recognition of Tribes. You have asked if the Alaska Oil and Gas Association has any concerns with the bill as currently written. This letter serves as our response.

Upon review and after verifying with our membership, AOGA has found nothing of concern in the bill language of House Bill 123 (version A). Alaska Native tribes referenced in the bill are currently recognized by the United States government under federal Indian law. Furthermore, nothing in this legislation appears to relinquish the State of Alaska's authority over particular lands, peoples, or activities, create any additional burdens on the State or private industry, or impact the rights of Alaska Natives as set forth in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act or under other applicable law.



THIS INITIATIVE WILL:

- Bring Alaskans of all political stripes together in **celebration of our heritage**
- Utilize the strength and expertise of Tribes and the State in **creating solutions** on issues like rural public safety, child welfare, healthcare and education.
- **End** the series of ineffective, divisive, and **expensive lawsuits** between the State and Alaska Tribes
- Create a clear and consistent framework for partnership between Tribes and the State to capitalize on opportunities for **new funding** for Alaska



Endorsements



Tlingit & Haida



Organized Village of Kake



Woody Island Tribal Council



COPPER RIVER
NATIVE ASSOCIATION



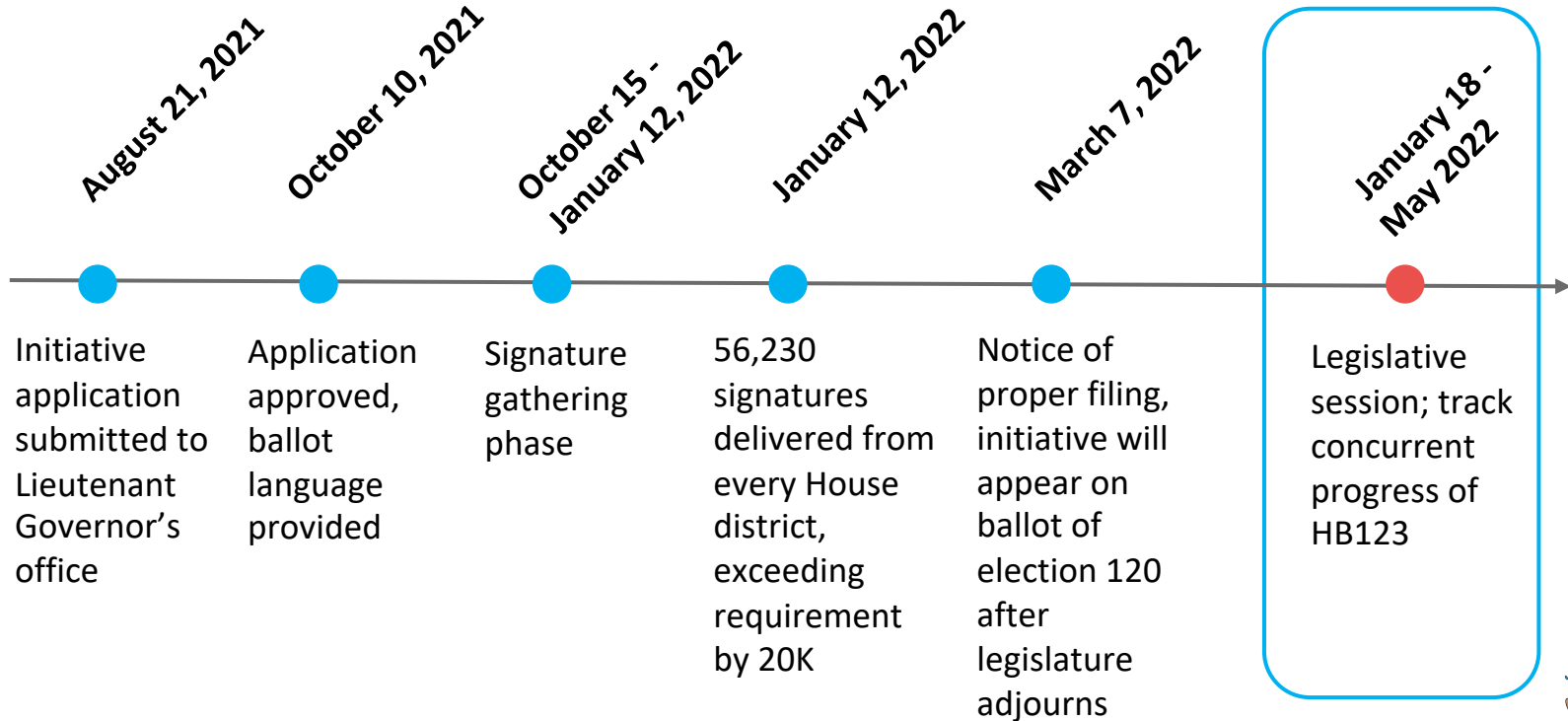
Organized Village of Kasaan



FAIRBANKS NATIVE
ASSOCIATION



Timeline



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Our signature requirement was the highest a ballot initiative has faced in 20 years. The fact that we finished early with backing from every community underscores that Alaskans understand how commonsense this is.

This initiative will open doors to more federal funding, better policy, and a more respectful partnership between the state and our Tribes to address issues that impact all Alaskans.”

Richard Chalyee Éesh Peterson
Chair, Alaskans for Better Government



Thank You

Contact us:
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This communication was paid for by Alaskans for Better Government, 721 Depot Dr, Suite 100, Anchorage, AK 99501. Richard Chalvey Eesh Peterson, Chair, approved this communication. Top contributors are Sixteen Thirty Fund, Washington, DC; Tides Advocacy, San Francisco, CA; and Sealaska Corporation, Juneau, AK.