



Election Update:

Elections

Alaska's open primary election was yesterday, and votes will continue to be tallied until the election is certified on August 31. There are thousands of ballots yet to be counted from absentee and early ballots and several rural precincts. These notes reflect current numbers and are subject to change.

Reminder: Alaska's open primary and ranked choice voting system means the top four candidates on August 31 will advance to the general election.

Here's a link to the latest report from the Division of Elections, current as of 1:30AM last night: [ElectionSummaryReportRPT](#)

Highlights

- Democrats showed strong performance across the ballot. **Mary Peltola (D)** leads incumbent **U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan (R)** 48.04% to 42.84%, by a difference of 6,854 votes.
- Incumbent **Congressman Nick Begich (R)** leads Alaska's statewide congressional race with 46.15% of the vote. Independent challenger **Bill Hill** and Democrat **Matt Schultz** (who withdrew from the race after ballots were final) have a combined 39.01% of the vote.
- As predicted, the two Democratic candidates for Alaska's open governor's race finished in the top two spots. Both former state legislators, **Jonathan Kreiss-Tompkins** leads with 21.67% followed by **Tom Begich** with 20.05%. Eight serious Republican candidates split the conservative vote, resulting in the lead Republican vote-getter **Bernadette Wilson** earning just 10.47%, followed by former Anchorage mayor **Dave Bronson** with 8.42%. In fifth and sixth place, respectively, are former AG **Treg Taylor** with 7.45% and **Click Bishop** with 7.14%. I expect there to be some shakeups in the Governor's race by August 31, and the final four may not reflect current standings.
- The primary election is not always a strong predictor of local races, but signs overall point toward favorability toward progressive candidates. It is likely that in the next legislature, both the Alaska House and Senate will be controlled by Democratic-leaning majorities.
- **Ballot Measure 1**, which limits campaign contributions, passed overwhelmingly with 71.46% of the vote.
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Governor's race still uncertain

The most consequential outcome of yesterday's primary is the determination of the top four finalists in the governor's race, but based on outstanding ballots and potential ticket maneuvering, it is too early to call the final four. Note that in the gubernatorial election the Gov and Lt. Gov candidates run as a ticket, but for brevity I am not listing the Lt. Gov portion of the ticket.

As expected, the two mainstream Democratic candidates led the primary results. **Jonathan Kriess-Tompkins (D)**, a former House representative from Sitka, currently leads with 21.7%. **Tom Begich (D)**, a former state Senator from Anchorage and brother to former U.S. Senator Mark Begich (and uncle to Congressman Nick Begich), follows with 20.1% - a difference of 2,100 votes. There has been considerable speculation that the Democrats would combine their tickets for the general election to consolidate support, but it remains to be seen how that will shake out.

Also as predicted, **Bernadette Wilson (R)** is the leading Republican candidate with 10.5% of the vote. Wilson has run a strong campaign and appeals to the Republican populist base, but she may hit a ceiling for support in the general election. Former Anchorage Mayor **Dave Bronson (R)** follows with 8.4%. Bronson has stated that he does not plan to drop out of the race to consolidate support for Wilson, so both are likely to appear on the final ticket. Former state Attorney General **Treg Taylor (R)** is currently in fifth place with 7.5%, and former state Senator and Labor Commissioner **Click Bishop (R)** is in sixth place with 7.1%.

Based on initial results, Democrats and progressive tickets fared well in the governor's race, with 44% of the vote in total. Republican-led tickets received 50% of the vote, but it is not safe to assume that all of those voters will consolidate behind Wilson or Bronson in the general election, both of whom are fairly conservative and have high unfavourability ratings. If we separate conservatives from the moderate/centrist Republicans, the vote splits 42% to conservative Republicans and 13% to moderates, a fraction of whom may be more likely to vote for a Democrat in the general election. I expect this race will come down to RCV tabulations.

State Legislative Elections

The primary election is not always a strong indicator of how state legislative races will go due to a number of factors, including low turnout, the open primary, and low summertime candidate engagement and campaigning. Few races had more than four candidates, so most general election ballots will look the same as the primary, only with the opportunity to rank candidates rather than choosing one. The high-level takeaway from the state legislative primaries is that next year's legislature is going to look a lot like the current makeup, with bipartisan/Democratic-led majorities likely in both bodies. Similar to the statewide races, Democrats and independents outperformed Republicans in the primary (and generally speaking, it is safe to assume that any independent/nonpartisan/undeclared candidate is going to caucus with Democrats).

State Senate

Of the ten of 20 Senate seats up for election, four are unopposed or have very safe incumbents. There are three open seats with no incumbents, but in each a former House representative is running for the upper chamber seat: In Kodiak, **Rep Louise Stutes (R)** is leading a three-way race with 47.6% to replace Sen Gary Stevens (R); in Fairbanks, **Rep Frank Tomaszewski (R)** is leading a two-way race with 62.3% to replace Sen Robb Myers (R); and in Western Alaska, **Rep Bryce Edgmon (I)** is leading a five-way race with 36.7% to replace Sen Lyman Hoffman (D). Incumbents in the three remaining contested seats appear safe based on the primary results: In Anchorage, **Sen Cathy Giessel (R)** leads in a four-way race with 60.8%; in Wasilla, **Sen Cathy Tilton (R)** leads in a four-way race with 42.5%; and in the northern Mat-Su/Copper Valley, **Sen George Rauscher (R)** leads a three-way race with 39.8%. No Senate seat is expected to flip party or political alignment.

State House

Democratic-aligned candidates outperformed Republicans in contested state House primary races. All 40 House seats are up for election, but about half are either uncontested, or the incumbent does not face a serious challenger. Here are some of the House primary results of interest for possible caucuses next session:

- In the open Kodiak seat vacated by Senate-hopeful Louise Stutes (R), independent candidate **Kathy Simpler (I)** leads with 60.3% against **Sheldon Prout (R)** with 39.8%. I thought this would be a closer race and was seen by some as a potential Republican pick-up (Stutes has historically been caucusing with Democrats).
- In Homer, incumbent **Sarah Vance (R)** is trailing **Brent Johnson (I)** by 10 points. This would be a Democratic pick-up if Johnson wins. This was a +16 Trump district in 2024.
- In South Anchorage/Girdwood, incumbent **Ky Holland (I)** is beating challenger (and former DNR Commissioner and Santos/BP lobbyist) **John Boyle (R)** by almost 17 points. Republicans were hoping this seat could be a pickup, but Boyle has his work cut out for him.
- Incumbent **Julie Coulombe (R)** from the lower Anchorage hillside is in a close race with challenger **Danni Hall (D)**, with just 172 votes securing Coulombe's current lead.
- Unsurprisingly, **Lisa Keller (D)** leads against Anchorage Assemblymember **Felix Rivera (D)** in the open midtown Anchorage seat vacated by Rep Andy Josephson.
- The Southwest Anchorage seat held by incumbent **Mia Costello (R)** is a very close race - Costello is currently behind perennial challenger **Denny Wells (D)** by 57 votes. If Wells wins this race in the general, it would be another Democratic pickup.
- In the open Government Hill/JBER seat, former legislator **Cliff Groh (D)** leads with 65% against **Dan Sager's (R)** 35%. This seat was held by retiring Rep David Nelson (R) but is a challenging seat for a Republican to hold in a non-presidential election year due to low base turnout. This seat will likely be a Democratic pickup.
- There were five candidates for the Eagle River House seat currently held by **Rep Jamie Allard (R)**. She faces two Republican challengers and a Democrat, but Allard seems to be holding on strong with 40.7% of the primary vote.
- The open Chugiak seat looks to be regained by former **Rep Ken McCarty (R)**, following the retirement of Rep Dan Saddler (R).
- In Wasilla, incumbent **Jubilee Underwood (R)** leads against challenger and former legislator **David Eastman (R)** by 215 votes.
- Next door, incumbent **Elexie Moore (R)** is in a tight four-way race with 33.8% of the vote, followed closely by perennial candidate **Stephen Wright (R)** with 32.8% (a difference of 30 votes).
- In what is shaping up to be a bit of an upset in Sutton/Chickaloon area, incumbent **Garret Nelson (R)** is losing in a six-way race to **Steve Menard (R)**. This race might be the most likely to be featured on the Jerry Springer show.
- In Big Lake, incumbent **Kevin McCabe (R)** has four challengers, including perennial candidate **Doug Massie (R)**. McCabe is probably safe, but this could be a race to watch.
- The North Pole three-way race could be close: incumbent **Mike Prax (R)** has a 118-vote lead against challenger **Barbary Haney (R)**.
- An open Fairbanks seat is hotly contested - incumbent Frank Tomaszewski vacated the seat at the last minute to run for Senate, and his wife **Harmony Tomaszewski (R)** filed to replace him. **Joy**

Beth Cottle (I), who has run for the seat before, is currently ahead of Tomaszewski by 165 votes. This was +20 Trump district in 2024, and it would be a major coup for an independent to win.

- The seat with the most candidates belongs to HD37, the Bristol Bay/Aleutians seat vacated by incumbent Rep Bryce Edgmon. There are seven candidates in the primary, none of whom I know, and the top four will advance to the general. Ten precincts are yet to be counted in this race, so it is too early to tell who will be in the final four.
- The Bethel seat will also be a close race - incumbent **Nellie Jimmie (D)** is losing to previous legislator **CJ McCormick (D)** by 106 votes - but not all precincts have reported in this district, so this could easily change.
- With four precincts remaining to be counted in the northernmost district, incumbent **Robyn Frier (D)** leads **Saima Chase (D)** by 23 points.

Keep in mind that 25 precincts still haven't reported their election-day results, and early votes cast late last week through Monday are also not tabulated - so things may change.

Chris, John and Reggie
J&H Consulting