

RESOLUTION #2023-02

A resolution in support of reducing the number of required city council officials from seven to three in communities under 1,000, via referendum or other mechanisms.

WHEREAS, Title 29 requires that second class cities have city councils of seven members; and

WHEREAS, the intent of the statute is to ensure appropriate representation within a community and avoid conflicts of interest in decision-making; and

WHEREAS, the number of seats on a governing body is variable, otherwise, with home rule or first class cities able to have as few as five, and some assemblies as large as 12; these are fairly responsive to population; and

WHEREAS, in many counties across the nation, decision-making is accomplished with just three county commissioners while maintaining transparent and accountable governance; and

WHEREAS, seven council members may make sense in larger communities but becomes problematic in smaller; and

WHEREAS, in a community of 1,000 with 500 adults of voting age, the council is .01% and in a community of 40 with voting-age adults at 20, the council is 35% of the community; and

WHEREAS, community leadership in small communities is limited not just by population but by the multiple leadership roles that may co-exist, including as tribal council members, Village Corporation board members, utility managers, and others, including at the City; and

WHEREAS, having a one-size fits all approach of seven council members may mean that some communities are never able to fill all seven seats, and are less likely to meet quorum; and

WHEREAS, local governments may be more effectively governed with a council that is more responsive to the size of the community and the availability of council members; and

WHEREAS, a smaller council in small communities can be more flexible in meeting regularly, more responsive to community needs, maintain accountability and transparency, and be in a stronger position to complete financial and governance requirements of the State.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Municipal League supports the amendment of Title 29 to allow for council seats that are responsive to community size and need, and which may range from three to seven; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a formula may be established in law or provided for as an option based on referendum by residents.