



City and Borough of Juneau
City & Borough Manager's Office
155 Heritage Way
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Telephone: 907-586-5240 | Facsimile: 907-586-5385

TO: Deputy Mayor Smith and Committee of the Whole
FROM: Katie Koester, City Manager
DATE: May 29, 2025
RE: Advocacy on Ballot Measures

Alaska Statute requires municipalities to register with APOC and appropriate funds if engaging in activities that could influence the outcome of an election.¹ There are several ballot propositions that could be on the October ballot, including one initiated by the Assembly to exempt sales tax on food and utilities and implement a seasonal sales tax.²

What would voter education look like without an appropriation/ filing with APOC

Staff would be very careful to only provide basic facts and do little to proactively disseminate information. For example, we would have an FAQ on our website and respond to media and constituent inquiries but would not speak at events. Assemblymembers are free to advocate in their capacity as individuals.

What would we do with an appropriation and authority to advocate?

Staff would hire a marketing firm to run a campaign. The New City Hall campaign taught us that it can be detrimental for staff close to an issue be the face of it. We would hire a consultant on a short-term contract under \$50,000 to provide radio and print advertising, social media ads, and direct mail to voters. There will be some staff interaction behind the scenes, and a CBJ website, which would be charged to the appropriation and appropriately documented with APOC.

Timing

Ballots are mailed mid-September, which means many voters are deciding well in advance of election day. To develop a robust, albeit short, media campaign, we would need an appropriation introduced at the next regular meeting. Attorney Wright determined that because it is temporary in nature, a resolution authorizing the manager to advocate and provide public information is appropriate. This means that with passage of the appropriating ordinance and authorizing resolution on July 28, staff could immediately register with APOC and begin work on the campaign.³ The earliest we will know if the propositions initiated by the public have enough signatures to make it on the ballot is June 9.

Recommendation: Discuss appetite for advocating and providing the public information that may influence the outcome of a future ballot proposition. If supportive, direct staff to introduce an ordinance at the June 9 regular meeting with corresponding resolution on July 28.

¹ The Alaska Public Offices Commission disclosure and filing requirements, AS 15.13.145(c)(2) permits the CBJ to provide the public with nonpartisan information about a ballot proposition, however, AS 15.13.145(b) prohibits the CBJ from using funds to influence the outcome of an election concerning a ballot proposition unless the CBJ specially appropriates the funds for that purpose by ordinance.

² The current proposal by Steininger/Smith/Hughs-Skandijs exempts sales tax on all utilities and food and implements a winter tax rate of 3.5% and summer sales tax rate of 7.5%. This ordinance will be introduced at the 6.9 regular meeting and referred to the 7.14 COW for further discussion.

³ June 9- Ordinance appropriating funds is introduced

July 28 – Ordinance appropriating funds and Resolution authorizing activity is passed. (this would be the same date an Ordinance putting the Steininger /Smith/Hughes- Skandijs proposal would be approved to be placed on the ballot)

Week of July 29- Staff registers with APOC, develops a scope of work, and negotiates a sole-source contract

August 4-15 – Consultant develops initial materials

August 15- September 31 – Direct media campaign immediately preceding the election

October 7 – Regular Municipal Election