




MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
MAYOR DAVE BRONSON

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Date: January 23, 2024
To: Anchorage Assembly
From: Mayor Dave Bronson 
Subject: Veto of Ordinance No. AO 2023-133

Today, in accordance with Section 2.30.100 of the Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) and Section 5.02 of the Municipal Charter, I am issuing a veto for AO 2023-133, which was approved during the Assembly's special meeting on January 16, 2024.

Several Assembly members have pointed out that the original 1991 subpoena ordinance restricted the scope of subpoenas to "municipal funds and policy." For this reason, AO 2023-133 was passed by the Assembly to solidify the expansion of subpoena powers, allowing the Assembly to subpoena individuals within its authority for any "public matter being considered by the assembly."

Citizen participation in Municipal governance is voluntary under normal circumstances. Citizens are encouraged to participate through their Community Councils, Boards and Commissions, public commentary at Assembly meetings, or by contacting their Assembly Member. The Assembly subpoena process changes voluntary participation into mandatory participation—even in the face of citizen objection. Uncontrolled Assembly subpoena powers will create a potential chilling effect on citizen volunteers participating in their municipal government. In a recent incident, four Anchorage residents were subpoenaed by the Assembly in relation to an election matter. Three of them sought legal representation, eventually persuading the Assembly to accept their voluntary appearance at a public meeting instead of a mandated one. For these citizens, the subpoena process itself became a form of punishment or penalty, and the broadening of this process raises deep concerns.

Moreover, critics argue that the expanded subpoena powers are unnecessary. The Municipality already has a prosecution department for handling misdemeanors. Ultimately, the additional financial burden falls on the Anchorage taxpayer.

Because this ordinance allows the Assembly to mandate citizen testimony in an otherwise voluntary public venue, expands Assembly power to subpoena testimony and document production, and imposes additional financial burden on the Anchorage taxpayer, I hereby veto AO 2023-133.