

Campbell: Minor misspelling won't spoil ballot (Updated)

Posted by Alaska_Politics

Posted: October 14, 2010 - 11:17 am

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The overseer of Alaska elections said Thursday that he doesn't expect that minor misspellings will disqualify write-in ballots for U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski.

Lt. Gov. Craig Campbell told The Associated Press that officials don't want to disenfranchise any voters and that he suspects, if there's a minor misspelling of, say, Murkowski, that those ballots will be counted for her.

"I'm sure they're going to be lenient" in counting those, he said, adding that officials will to their best to count ballots that show "clear intent."

But Campbell said the farther a ballot gets from including either her last name or Lisa Murkowski, the more difficult it will be for ballot counters to determine voter intent — and the more likely it will be for those ballots to be challenged, particularly if the race is tight.

While "Murkowsky" probably would count, he said, it's questionable whether "Liza," Lisa misspelled, would.

Murkowski, who lost the GOP primary to Joe Miller, officially filed as a Republican write-in candidate Wednesday. She said she had not gotten a clear interpretation from the state as to what would count and was encouraging voters — in an attempt to avoid any challenges — to fill in the ballot oval and write in "Lisa Murkowski."

She also is urging supporters — if they need — to scrawl her correctly spelled name on a piece of paper they can take with them into the polling booth or to write her name on their hands. She's also handing out blue wristbands that read: "Lisa Murkowski Write it in," with a darkened oval. The director of the state Division of Elections says voters will

be allowed to wear them so long as they're not visible to others. If they are visible, that would be like wearing a campaign button on a coat, which isn't allowed, and the voter would be asked to remove it.

Campbell said that neither Murkowski nor her attorney has contacted him.

But he said she appears to be doing the right thing in educating her supporters about the write-in process.

His read of the law is that voters would need to blacken the oval and either write in Murkowski or Lisa Murkowski — her name as it appears on her declaration to run — for there to be no question about whether their vote would count.

Murkowski faces Miller and Democrat Scott McAdams. She also faces long odds: the last U.S. Senate candidate to win in a write-in bid was Strom Thurmond in 1954. And her opponents believe they have a distinct advantage by having their names already printed on the ballots.

Murkowski's campaign slogan is "Let's Make History."

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