

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ZACK FIELDS

Fairview • South Addition • Forest Park • Downtown • North Star

House Bill 97 Version A

Organized retail crime is a growing problem in Alaska and throughout the country. A survey by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce found 54% of U.S. small business owners experienced an increase in shoplifting in 2021.

Online marketplaces, such as Amazon, eBay, and Facebook Marketplace, permit the resale of goods with relative anonymity, allowing organized crime rings to coordinate the theft of high-value retail items, such as power tools, technology, and other items, and for these groups to resell these items at nearly retail value. These actions often support a criminal underbelly, which uses the resale of goods to finance other illicit activities, such as the drug trade.

At least thirty-four states have acted on organized retail crime, for example:

- Virginia made organized retail crime a felony.
- Georgia made it more difficult for organized groups to resell stolen goods online.
- Minnesota created a separate offense for organized retail theft.
- Oregon made it easier for prosecutors to combine organized retail crime offenses happening across jurisdictions.

HB 97 modifies the criminal code to lower the dollar-amount threshold for felony offenses. The bill defines organized retail theft and makes it into an aggravated factor for use in sentencing. With the goal of supporting local retailers, the bill also establishes a 2% sales tax for resellers and creates an organized retail theft fund in the general fund, intended to fund law enforcement agencies statewide to combat theft in our communities.