



March 16, 2012

AMERICAN CIVIL  
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The Honorable Hollis French, Chair  
The Honorable Bill Wielechowski, Vice-Chair  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
Alaska State Senate  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

*via email:* [Senator\\_Hollis\\_French@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Senator_Hollis_French@legis.state.ak.us)  
[Senator\\_Bill\\_Wielechowski@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Senator_Bill_Wielechowski@legis.state.ak.us)

**Re: SB 200: Improved Eyewitness Identification  
ACLU Review**

Dear Chair French and Vice-Chair Wielechowski:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony with respect to Senate Bill 200, which improves the procedures for eyewitnesses to identify criminal suspects.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Alaska represents thousands of members and activists throughout Alaska who seek to preserve and expand the individual freedoms and civil liberties guaranteed by the United States and Alaska Constitutions. In that context, **we support this legislation.**

**This Bill Improves the Reliability of Eyewitness Identification  
to Strengthen Prosecutions and Minimize False Convictions**

The proper goal of the criminal justice system is to convict the guilty and acquit the innocent while respecting individuals' constitutional rights. Mistaken eyewitness testimony frustrates this aim. As Chair French articulated in his sponsor statement, eyewitness identification, while powerful, is not infallible. Indeed, it is its confluence of persuasiveness and fallibility that has led to hundreds of false convictions. This bill is an important step to mitigate the risk of false prosecutions and convictions,

which will protect Alaskans by increasing the odds that the guilty will be convicted and the innocent will be spared.

The ACLU of Alaska supports this bill because it limits the likelihood that an eyewitness will be influenced, intentionally or not, by police. It helps to protect Alaskans' constitutional right to be free from improper prosecution and it enhances the accuracy of legitimate prosecutions.

We are pleased that the Judiciary Committee is considering Senate Bill 200 and we hope that it passes without significant amendment. Please feel free to contact the undersigned should you have any questions or seek additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. A. Mittman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey Mittman  
*Executive Director*  
ACLU of Alaska

cc: Senator Joe Paskvan, [Senator\\_Joe\\_Paskvan@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Senator_Joe_Paskvan@legis.state.ak.us)  
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