

Senator Hollis French

Alaska State Legislature

State Capitol, Room 417
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Phone: (907) 465-3892
Fax: (907) 465-6595



716 West 4th Avenue, Suite 420
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Phone: (907) 269-0234
Fax: (907) 269-0238

SB 200 Eyewitnesses and Lineups

Sponsor Statement

Evidence provided by eyewitnesses is a vital part of many criminal investigations. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, some 77,000 people nationwide go to trial each year because eyewitnesses have picked them out of lineups or photo arrays. Eyewitness testimony is arguably some of the most powerful evidence presented at a trial.

Since 1989, however, DNA technology has resulted in over 230 exonerations of people who, on average, had served 12 years in prison, and 75% of those convictions involved misidentifications by eyewitnesses. When innocent people are convicted, not only do they suffer an enormous injustice, but the real perpetrator is never caught and taken off the street.

Organizations such as the American Bar Association, The Police Foundation and the National Institute of Justice have identified procedures that improve the accuracy of eyewitness identifications. Senate Bill 200 will require law enforcement agencies to adopt specific procedures for conducting photo and live line-ups. It will require the Department of Public Safety to create and administer a training program for law enforcement officers on scientific findings and the use of appropriate methods when interviewing eyewitnesses to crimes. I urge your support for this important step toward ensuring that perpetrators are caught, and innocent people are screened out during eyewitness processes.