



March 6, 2015

Dear Alaskan Legislators,

I am writing in regard to HB 117 / Senate Bill 54 which requires reporting of untested rape kits in Alaska and wanted to share with you Tennessee's experience in addressing our rape kit backlog.

In response to discovering that Memphis, Tennessee had more than 12,000 untested rape kits, some of which were more than 30 years old, the Tennessee General Assembly enacted legislation last year requiring all law enforcement agencies to inventory and report their rape kit backlogs to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) who was then required to report the data to the General Assembly. The bill had no fiscal note and was seen as the first step in developing policies to address the backlog. While Memphis has subsequently received some additional state, federal, and private funds to help address their backlog, results of the audit found that of the 9,062 untested kits statewide, 7,121 of those kits were from Memphis.

Conducting the audit and subsequent testing of rape kits has led to the arrest of serial rapists, exposed the lack of funding for laboratories, and identified the need to develop consistent policies for the investigation of sexual assault crimes.

The Tennessee General Assembly is currently considering a bill requiring law enforcement agencies to submit rape kits to TBI for testing within 60 days of receipt. The bill also sets up procedures for collection and storage of non-reporting kits and mandates the adoption of sexual assault policies by all law enforcement agencies in Tennessee.

Please let me know if I can provide you with any additional information.

Best regards,

Kathy Walsh  
Executive Director