

# Alaska Women's Lobby

Defending and advancing the rights and needs of women, children and families in Alaska since 1981

## **HB 31: Sexual Assault Examination Kits**

January 2017

The Alaska Women's Lobby, with steering committees in Fairbanks and Juneau as well as members across the state, supports the sexual assault response team (SART) process for handling sexual assault cases reported to law enforcement. SARTs integrate the investigative, medical and advocacy processes in a sexual assault response into a seamless system so that victims of these heinous crimes are not further traumatized when reporting what has happened to them.

An integral part of SART is that of gathering physical evidence through the use of a sexual assault examination kit. Kits are toolboxes of evidence gathering procedures and materials the use of which allow for consistent collection of evidence regardless of where the crime took place.

Whether a victim reports to law enforcement, goes to an emergency department of a hospital or goes to a clinic, or whether he or she calls an advocacy crisis line, in communities with trained SARTs, the team is called together. Options are explained to the person reporting so an informed decision can be made about next steps, if any, in the reporting process. If the person would like evidence of the assault to be gathered and preserved, then a sexual assault exam kit will be used.

One of the devastating effects of a sexual assault is the loss of control one feels and it takes time to work through that feeling. Respecting the rights of the person who has been assaulted, including decision-making about what happens from the point of the assault forward, is critical to healing. Some people want evidence gathered; some people want a medical exam to ensure injuries are treated; some people want both; and, some people don't want either.

If a kit is used, some people are comfortable with it being tested immediately so the evidence may help in furthering the investigation and some people want the evidence gathered but are not ready to take the next steps with the criminal justice system so only want the kit used but not processed. Some people want to remain anonymous but are willing to have the evidence processed.

As can be surmised, the variables to be considered in ensuring all kits are treated in the appropriate manner make for a complex solution. A cohesive tracking system managed by the Department of Public Safety for these kits, some used and held for future processing; some used and processed for current investigations; some used with a known victim and some used with anonymous victims; is a good measure to take in assuring justice for each person who chooses to have an exam whatever the choices surrounding the use of the kits are.

PO Box 20891, Juneau, AK 99802 \* [akwomenslobby@gmail.com](mailto:akwomenslobby@gmail.com)



Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest and Hawaii

Re: HB 31 (Sexual Assault Examination Kits)

January, 31 2017

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest & Hawaii (PPVNH), I am writing to express our strong support of HB 31, a bill that will directly impact survivors of sexual assault in our state who are waiting for closure and justice.

In a state with tragically high sexual assault rates, it is crucial that all sexual assault examination kits are collected, submitted, and tested in a timely manner, when requested by a survivor. Leaving thousands of sexual assault examination kits untested not only allows sexual predators to evade justice and re-offend, but also leaves thousands of sexual assault survivors without closure.

HB 31 would begin the process of addressing this backlog. Today, Alaska does not track or monitor how many sexual assault examination kits have been at testing facilities or in police storage. States and cities that have taken steps to address the backlog in their forensics facilities are seeing significant gains for their efforts. Of the tens of thousands of old kits finally being analyzed throughout the country, cities and states have been identifying perpetrators in the national DNA database and are steadily making gains in indicting and prosecuting those individuals. Alaska needs to follow their lead.

Every day that a kit goes untested is one more day that a sexual assault survivor goes without closure or justice. PPVNH supports Representative Tarr and her leadership on this issue. We urge you to consider the effects this legislation will have on sexual assault survivors and to support HB 31.

Thank you,

Alyson Currey, MSW  
Legislative Liaison  
Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest & Hawaii

**Celeste Novak**

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**From:** Rep. Geran Tarr  
**Subject:** FW: HB 31 - Support for rape kit reform

Rep. Tarr:

Natasha Alexenko and I are contacting you in support of your bill (HB 31) to establish a rape kit tracking system for Alaska, along with other rape kit reform. We'd love to speak with you some time to discuss your legislation and what additional support we can provide to you. Is there a time we might set up a call?

In the meantime, you may be interested in learning about the federal grant called SAFE-ITR (Sexual Assault Forensic Exam – Inventory, Tracking, Reporting) which can be used to establish rape kit tracking systems. Of course, state-based funding is always best, but...the federal grant could help with fiscal note considerations. The FY 2016 solicitation can be found at <https://nij.gov/funding/Documents/solicitations/NIJ-2016-9088.pdf> -- the FY 2017 solicitation has not yet been released.

Thank you for introducing this very important legislation, and we look forward to speaking with you soon.

*Lisa H. Hurst*

**Sr. Government Affairs Consultant**



202-251-8978

[lhurst@gth-gov.com](mailto:lhurst@gth-gov.com)



# Community United For Safety And Protection

Advocating Safety and Protection for all people in Alaska's Sex Trade

[www.sextraffickingalaska.com](http://www.sextraffickingalaska.com).

Support for HB 31

January 30, 2017

Dear Representative Tarr,

Thank you so much for taking the leadership in stemming the epidemic of sexual assaults in Alaska with HB 31. We would like to extend our full support for this important House Bill. Perpetrators must know that they are going to suffer consequences for their heinous crimes because rape kits are no longer going to be hidden away as the lowest priorities.

Alaska will never stop being the rape capital of the United States as long as we don't even have rape kits prioritized to process and then match results with state and national data bases to hold accountable those responsible in a timely manner. In 2014, Detroit identified 188 serial rapists by processing just 1,600 rape kits out of their much larger backlog.

In December of 2016, Community United for Safety and Protection had Hays Research firm in Anchorage conduct a survey of 904 Alaskan voters' priorities. Processing Alaska's backlog of rape kits was a close second priority to investigating cases of murdered and missing sex workers, with 36% listing it as their first priority and 37% listing it as their second priority (see the results of that question represented in graph form below).

Clearly, Alaskans take this issue seriously and are in agreement with the passing of HB 31.

Thank you,

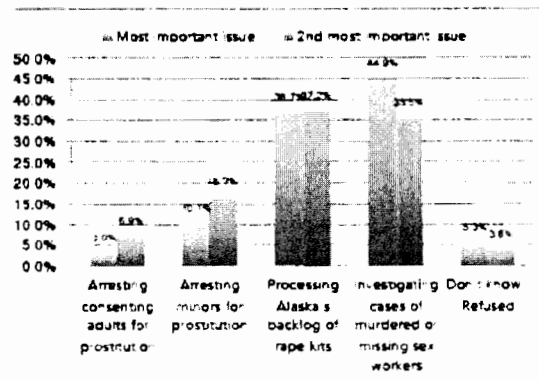
Maxine Doogan  
 Kat Elroy  
 Terra Burns  
 Crystal Godby  
 Community United for Safety and Protection  
[www.sextraffickingalaska.com](http://www.sextraffickingalaska.com)

**Question 2 - Most Important Issues being dealt with in Alaska (from list)**

I am going to read you four issues. Please tell me which one is the most important issue to you. From the same list, please tell me which is the second most important issue to you.

**Analysis**

Additional cross tabulations for Question 2 can be found on pages 16-17 of this report.



**Most important issue**

Arresting consenting adults for prostitution	3.0%
Arresting minors for prostitution	10.1%
Processing Alaska's backlog of rape kits	36.7%
Investigating cases of murdered or missing sex workers	44.9%
Don't know / Refused	5.3%

**2nd most important issue**

Arresting consenting adults for prostitution	6.9%
Arresting minors for prostitution	16.7%
Processing Alaska's backlog of rape kits	37.2%
Investigating cases of murdered or missing sex workers	35.5%
Don't know / Refused	3.6%

**Rep. Geran Tarr**

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**From:** Dana Dardis <ddardis@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2017 8:57 PM  
**To:** Rep. Geran Tarr  
**Subject:** House Bill 31

I support house bill 31.

Dana Dardis  
2422 Telequana Dr.  
Anchorage, AK 99517  
(907) 868-3883

**Rep. Geran Tarr**

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**ent:** Monday, January 30, 2017 8:57 PM  
**To:** Rep. Geran Tarr  
**Subject:** House Bill 31

I support house bill 31.

Dana Dardis  
2422 Telequana Dr.  
Anchorage, AK 99517  
(907) 868-3883

**Rep. Geran Tarr**

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**From:** Taralyn <taralyndicus@gmail.com>  
**ent:** Monday, January 30, 2017 11:24 PM  
**To:** Rep. Geran Tarr  
**Subject:** Support House Bill 31

Dear Representative Tarr,

I'm writing to you as a concerned and compassionate Alaskan citizen and survivor of sexual assault and rape, asking that you please support HB 31.

Rape changes your entire life. The recovery process is difficult and varies from person to person. Some are never able to recover at all. Please help victims of rape get through this process as quickly as possible, by requiring that all rape kits be tested within 18 months. Don't force these victims to relive their trauma for any longer than is necessary. Let them have a chance to heal, and move on.

Thank you for taking the time to read what I had to say. It was difficult to have to revisit my own trauma in order to write this email, but I felt it was important to speak up for others like me, because things have to change. There are too many of us. And there wouldn't be as many if rape kits were tested in a timely manner.

Sincerely,  
Taralyn Dicus  
Palmer, Alaska



**Rep. Geran Tarr**

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**From:** Taralyn <taralyndicus@gmail.com>  
**ent:** Monday, January 30, 2017 11:24 PM  
**To:** Rep. Geran Tarr  
**Subject:** Support House Bill 31

Dear Representative Tarr,

I'm writing to you as a concerned and compassionate Alaskan citizen and survivor of sexual assault and rape, asking that you please support HB 31.

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Thank you for taking the time to read what I had to say. It was difficult to have to revisit my own trauma in order to write this email, but I felt it was important to speak up for others like me, because things have to change. There are too many of us. And there wouldn't be as many if rape kits were tested in a timely manner.

Sincerely,  
Taralyn Dicus  
Palmer, Alaska

**Rep. Geran Tarr**

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**From:** Contessa Gossett <dodgermessacam5@gmail.com>  
**ent:** Monday, January 30, 2017 11:19 PM  
**To:** Rep. Geran Tarr  
**Subject:** HB31

Hello Representative Tarr, please support the passing of HB31 so rape kits will have to be tested within 18months.

This is vital for criminal investigations and prosecutions. Victims need to be represented through proper criminal investigations. Thank You, Contessa Shade Gossett, Palmer Alaska.

Sent from Hollywood Kid

**Rep. Geran Tarr**

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**From:** K Griffin <23kgriffin@gmail.com>  
**ent:** Monday, January 30, 2017 11:51 PM  
**To:** Rep. Geran Tarr; Rep. Les Gara; Rep. Chris Tuck  
**Subject:** HB 31  
**Attachments:** WebPage.pdf; ATT00001.htm

Hello,

Thank you for working to get this important legislation written and moving forward. This is such an important issue for so many women in our state. There are too many rape kits that have been left on shelves. One is too many. Too many women were abandoned and their attackers went on with their lives. One is too many. Testing kits within 18 months will greatly help expedite the needed arrests (especially of those repeat offenders) and convictions to help many women find a bit of closure of that episode in their life.

Thank you kindly,  
Karyn Griffin  
Soldotna

<http://www.legis.state.ak.us/PDF/30/Bills/HB0031A.PDF>

**Rep. Geran Tarr**

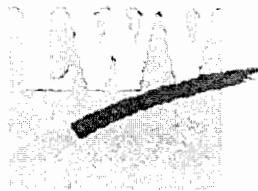
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**From:** R H <salmonchowder@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 1:09 AM  
**To:** Rep. Geran Tarr  
**Subject:** in support of HB 31

Dear Representative Tarr,

I just heard through the grapevine that there's a bill to do something about the state's backlog of rape kits, and I just wanted to say I'm all for that. That's the sort of thing I read about and wonder that we let those just sit around when processing and testing could substantially bring about justice for victims, help catch offenders before they rape again, and generally show that our society does actually consider sexual assault to be a serious crime. This bill sounds like a step in the right direction.

Thank you,  
Ruth Hulbert  
Palmer, AK



# The League of Women Voters

**P.O. Box 90079, Anchorage, AK 99509-0079**

January 26, 2017

**OFFICERS**

Dear Representative Tarr:

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**Vice-President**

Judy Andree

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Marianne Mills

**Treasurer**

Carol Dickinson

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Gail Knobf

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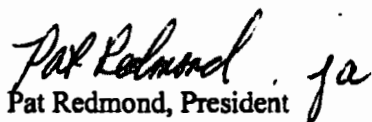
Phyllis Tugman-Alexander

The League of Women Voters Alaska (LWVAK) supports the passage into law of HB 31, Sexual Assault Examination Kits. LWVAK recognizes the importance of a coordinated effort by law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and the medical community when it comes to dealing with sexual assault. In addition, the League of Women Voters United States (LWVUS) endorsed the Violence Against Women Act and asks that an emphasis be put on violence prevention. Sexual assault is a violent act that leaves its victims traumatized, sometimes for decades or longer. Any steps taken to enhance the collection of data regarding sexual assault and the coordination between police, prosecutors, and judges will be a step toward the prevention of sexual violence.

HB 31 requires the State to establish a tracking system as well as collection and processing protocols so that timely testing of sexual assault kits can occur. In addition, HB 31 requires that police departments in the State of Alaska submit sexual assault kits within 18 months of collection. Adding the data from the testing of a sexual assault kit to a larger database can help apprehend serial rapists and result in justice for the victim as well as the removal of a dangerous person from the opportunity to create another victim.

The large backlog of kits that have never been submitted for testing and, therefore, never tested demands a standardized method of handling this evidence. An inventory must be made of untested kits and an ongoing effort established to see that the results of these kits are entered into a statewide database. The measures required in HB 31 can assist in preventing violence against women and men. Passing these measures into law is a responsible step in the right direction.

Thank you for your serious consideration.

  
Pat Redmond, President

League of Woman Voters Alaska

**Rep. Geran Tarr**

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**From:** Chelsea Lindquist <chelserin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2017 10:52 PM  
**To:** Rep. Geran Tarr  
**Subject:** HB 31

I am writing in support of House Bill 31, that will require justice for rape victims by requiring that all rape kits be tested within 18 months.

Thank you,  
Chelsea Vukovich

**Rep. Geran Tarr**

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**From:** Maio Nishkian <Maio.Nish@hotmail.com>  
**ent:** Monday, January 30, 2017 11:23 PM  
**To:** Rep. Geran Tarr  
**Subject:** House Bill 31

I support House Bill 31, I support justice for rape victims by requiring that all rape kits be tested within 18 months.

Please support this bill for Alaskans and for justice.

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Maio Nishkian  
Palmer, AK 99645