

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

HB 31 would mandate all sexual assault examination kits collected in Alaska be tested within 18 months and tracked through a process developed by the Alaska Department of Public Safety. The last count found around 3,600 untested kits in Alaska. Currently, there is no tracking mechanism or standard protocol for the over 200 law enforcement agencies in Alaska that may receive untested kits.

Alaska rates consistently at the top of sexual assault and domestic violence cases in the country, many of the perpetrators remain untried by the criminal justice system. This bill endeavors to eliminate that injustice. When tested, DNA evidence contained by rape kits can be an incredibly powerful tool to solve and prevent crime. It can identify an unknown assailant and confirm the presence of a known suspect. It can affirm the survivor's account of the attack and discredit the suspect. It can connect the suspect to other crime scenes and identify serial offenders. It can exonerate the wrongly convicted or accused.

The pre-filed bill requires all kits be tested within 18 months and creates a standard protocol for 200 law enforcement agencies. HB 31 will support the effort to maintain DNA and other evidence that can bring criminals to justice. A recent case in Alaska shows the power of collecting DNA information.

House Bill 31 calls for development of a statewide protocol for processing of rape kits to be used by the 200 law enforcement agencies statewide and a new inventory of untested rape kits in Alaska by September 1, 2017. The bill also stipulates that the Department of Public Safety transmit a report on the issue to the Alaska Legislature by November 1st, 2017. The report must contain the exact number of untested sexual assault examination kits and a plan for addressing the backlog of untested kits.