

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Session  
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## Representative Chuck Kopp

House Majority Leader · District 10 · Oceanview/Old Seward, Bayshore/Klatt

### Sponsor Statement for HB 239b – Bill Version I

**"An Act relating to criminally negligent homicide; relating to the duty of an operator immediately after an accident; and providing for an effective date."**

The passage of HB 239 will create an Aggravated Criminally Negligent Homicide and Failure-to-Render-Aid offense, classified as a Class A Felony.

Alaskans expect that when a driver's criminal negligence takes a life—and the driver flees instead of helping—the law responds with accountability that matches the harm. Recent cases show that it isn't always happening.

In 2021, 26-year-old **Chase (Miller) Bowerson** was killed along the Glenn Highway. The defendant pled guilty to **criminally negligent homicide** and **leaving the scene**, receiving **2½ years to serve**— Ultimately, the defendant **actually served eight months** because of "Good Time" and was eligible for parole after serving 1/3 of the sentence, a sentence that, while within today's presumptive ranges, does not reflect the gravity of causing a death and abandoning the victim.

This bill closes that gap. It creates **Aggravated Criminally Negligent Homicide** when a death caused by criminal negligence with a motor vehicle is accompanied by **failure to render aid**, elevates the offense from a Class B felony to a **Class A felony**, sets a **4-7 year** presumptive range for first offenders, and requires **consecutive time** when both the death and the failure-to-aid are convicted in the same incident. These changes keep Alaska within constitutional sentencing principles while aligning penalties with community expectations and deterrence goals.

**Why now?** Courts and prosecutors have repeatedly confronted fatal hit-and-runs where plea constraints and low presumptive ranges for Class B negligent homicide pull sentences down—even when a driver flees or conceals evidence. The result is a perceived mismatch between culpability and consequence, eroding public trust.

### What the bill does

- Defines an aggravated form of negligent homicide when paired with failure to render aid.
- Increases the offense class and presumptive range to reflect the combined harm.
- Requires targeted **consecutive time** when both convictions arise from the same fatal incident.
- Preserves judicial discretion for case-specific facts (aggravators/mitigators still apply), while establishing a floor that prevents de minimis outcomes in fatal hit-and-runs.

### **Public safety & deterrence**

Leaving the scene dramatically reduces a victim's chance of survival and impedes evidence-gathering. Alaska's message must be clear: **you stop, you help, you stay**—or face serious time.

I respectfully ask for your support to restore accountability and honor the lives lost to fatal hit-and-run crimes.