

# REPRESENTATIVE JULIE COULOMBE

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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## Sponsor Statement

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### **Protecting Alaskans from Mail Theft and Identity Fraud**

Mail theft is not just an inconvenience—it is a gateway to financial fraud, identity theft, and serious economic harm, particularly for our elderly and most vulnerable citizens. In an age where personal and financial information is increasingly targeted, HB 77 seeks to modernize Alaska’s theft laws by classifying mail theft as a Class C felony, strengthening penalties, and closing legal loopholes that have allowed criminals to exploit our residents.

Mail theft is on the rise across the nation, contributing to millions of cases of identity theft and fraud. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Alaskans report high levels of fraud, and with the increasing sophistication of mail-related crimes—including stolen checks, credit card statements, and government documents—it is essential that we act now. Currently, Alaska’s laws do not adequately address mail theft as a serious crime. Under existing statutes, mail theft can be prosecuted as a misdemeanor or under vague general theft laws, leaving room for lenient sentencing or even lead to an absence of sentencing. HB 77 changes this by clearly defining mail theft as theft in the second degree, a felony offense, ensuring that perpetrators face real consequences.

By passing HB 77, we equip law enforcement with the tools needed to effectively prosecute mail thieves, deter would-be offenders, and protect Alaskans from the devastating consequences of identity fraud. This bill ensures that victims of mail theft—especially seniors and vulnerable populations—have stronger legal protections and recourse.

HB 77 is a common-sense, necessary step in modernizing Alaska’s theft laws to keep pace with evolving criminal activity. It ensures stronger deterrence, clearer legal definitions, and harsher penalties for those who exploit our postal system.

We urge our colleagues in the Legislature to support HB 77 to protect Alaskans, their privacy, and their financial security.

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