



**REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK KOPP
DISTRICT 24
Klatt Road – Oceanview – Southport – Bayshore**

**Sponsor Statement
Establishing the Restorative Justice Account**

The Alaska State Constitution recognizes the rights of crime victims through Article I, Section 24. Restitution is one of those rights. Unfortunately, the outstanding balance of court-ordered restitution payments to victims has remained very high and victims find themselves waiting for several years to receive payments. According to data from the Alaska Court System, the current balance of outstanding court-ordered restitution is over \$129 million.

There is a mechanism in place to assist victims of crime through the criminal fund established by the Legislature in 1988 (HB245), but over time, use of the fund has transitioned from assisting crime victims to paying for inmate healthcare. HB 216 seeks to empower survivors of crimes by once again making assistance to crime victims the top priority.

House Bill 216 establishes the Restorative Justice Account. It prioritizes the use of the funds for compensation through the Violent Crimes Compensation Board and enables the Office of Victims' Rights to qualify for appropriations from this fund and authorizes them to pay court-ordered restitution to victims of crimes when a victim has exhausted all other avenues available. The bill also authorizes the use of the funds for grants to nonprofit organizations that provide services to crime victims and for substance abuse and mental health treatment for offenders. This bill does not eliminate an offender's liability to pay restitution, fines, and other fees imposed to them through the criminal justice system.

Additionally, HB 216 extends the opt-out period from 30 to 90 days for victims to receive automatic help from the State of Alaska to collect restitution and allows Alaskans to support the Violent Crimes Compensation Board through the Pick.Click.Give program.

HB 216 will prioritize survivors of crimes.