



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Löki Gale Tobin
Education Committee Chair

EDUCATION
HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES
JUDICIARY
TRANSPORTATION

SB 62 Sponsor Substitute Board of Parole Membership

Sponsor Statement

Alaska's incarceration rate is higher than the national average, and higher than any democratic nation across the planet. The Alaska Board of Parole serves a crucial function in our justice system by weighing the eligibility of incarcerated individuals to reenter society through parole. SB 62 seeks to help the Alaska Board of Parole process parole applications in a fair and accountable manner.

SB 62 expands the number of seats on the Alaska Board of Parole from five to seven, establishes criteria for membership on the board, and applies ten-year term limits to board members. This expansion will help address the substantial workload of the board which presides over hundreds of hearings a year on discretionary parole, parole revocation, geriatric and medical parole and preliminary hearings.

SB 62 adds criteria for membership to create a board that more closely reflects the incarcerated population in Alaska. Alaska Natives make up 40% of the people incarcerated in Alaska yet are approximately 20% of the state's population. SB 62 requires one board member to be a member of a federally recognized tribe. 80% of all individuals in the state's correctional system report a substance use disorder. SB 62 requires that one member of the Parole Board have drug and alcohol rehabilitation support experience. It also requires one member be a licensed physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist and one member to be a victim of a crime or member of a crime victim advocacy group.

SB 62 requires the Board of Parole to submit an annual report detailing parole decisions. This will increase public awareness of the Board process, and parole hearings in general. An annual report will help policymakers determine what policy measures are effective at increasing successful discretionary parole and reducing recidivism.

The July 2024 sunset audit conducted by the Division of Legislative Audit included the following statement: *"During the three years before criminal justice reform (2014 through 2016), on average, the board granted discretionary parole 63 percent of the time. In contrast, after criminal justice reforms were repealed (2021 through 2023), the board granted parole, on average, only 25 percent of the time. The board chair and the executive director were unable to provide specific reasons why the parole rate decreased."* An annual report will provide greater accountability and transparency to board deliberations and increase public awareness of this important part of our justice system.

34-LS0227\N 4.09.2025

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WHILE IN SESSION

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