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SPONSOR STATEMENT

CS SB 30 (2d JUD)

An Act providing for the release of certain property in the custody of a law enforcement agency to a crime victim under certain conditions and relating to requests for that release by the Office of Victims' Rights

CS SB 30 (2d JUD) introduces within the Alaska Code of Criminal Procedure a process for victims of property crime to petition the court for relief in recovering their property held as evidence.

Too often victims of theft and robbery are victimized a second time by bureaucracy. This is particularly true in cases of property crimes where demonstrable loss occurs to the victim's person or business as a result of property being held for a protracted period of time by a law enforcement agency, usually at the direction of prosecution, defense counsel and/or other interested parties.

The law as currently written, provides discretionary authority to the prosecution for release of property, but does not clearly provide a right of hearing for a property owner to directly petition the court in those circumstances when crime victims, prosecution and defense cannot come to agreement on return of property to the crime victim.

Victims of property theft often face the added burden of replacing stolen property. Small business owners who suffer property loss may face bankruptcy if the loss results in the inability to consummate a sale, continue their business operations, or the stolen property is uninsured or underinsured.

Property recovered by a law enforcement agency may be held as evidence for a protracted period of time. Property owners deserve protections in the law to ensure their property is held as evidence only as long as necessary for the prosecution and defense to physically retain the item, without jeopardizing the case.

CS SB 30 (2d JUD) will provide property owners in the Alaska Code of Criminal Procedure, a clearly identifiable process to petition the court through the Office of Victims' Rights for the recovery of their property in those circumstances where they are otherwise not able to reach agreement with interested parties on the return of property.

