

SENATE BILL 222
SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Sectional Analysis

Sections 1 and 2 correct an error made in 2007 when the legislature enacted AS 11.56.759, that adopted a class A misdemeanor if a sex offender violates specific conditions of probation or parole. One of the requirements of the crime is that the person have served the entire period of incarceration imposed for the crime. This is effective for probationers, but not for parolees, because a person is never on parole if he or she has served the entire period of incarceration. A member of the Parole Board brought this issue to our attention, because the statute has caused problems for the board in dealing with parolees. These sections remove parolees from the statute.

Section 3 rewrites AS 11.56.840, failure to register as a sex offender in the second degree. Although the proposal is similar to current law, it removes the requirement that the state prove a culpable mental state for the conduct of not registering or otherwise filing the required notices and information. The state would still be required to prove that the person knew he or she was required to register and failed to do so. The section also adopts an affirmative defense that unforeseeable circumstances outside the control of the person prevented him or her from registering, and that the person contacted the Department of Public Safety immediately upon being able to do so.

Section 4 would raise a form of harassment in the second degree (that is, with intent to harass or annoy another person, the person subjects the other person to offensive physical contact) to harassment in first degree if the offensive physical contact is by the offender touching the other person's genitals, anus, or female breast. Harassment in the first degree is a class A misdemeanor; the second degree offense is a class B misdemeanor. There have been prosecutions recently involving offensive touchings that occurred so quickly that the court concluded that the victim did not have time to convey lack of consent to the offender. The court reduced these charges from sexual assault to harassment in the second degree. This conduct is more serious than a class B misdemeanor; the bill would raise it to a class A misdemeanor.

Sections 5, 6, and 7 address a problem with Alaska law prohibiting possession of child pornography that was raised by a recent decision of the Alaska Court of Appeals, *Worden v. State*, 213 P.3d 144 (Alaska App. 2009). *Worden* held that our current statute does not prohibit a person from viewing child pornography on a computer; rather, the statute requires that the person must also save it on the computer to be considered to possess it. In response to this decision, the bill adopts the federal approach. It prohibits possession of child pornography, and it also prohibits a person from knowingly accessing child pornography on a computer with the intent to view it.

The bill also proposes an affirmative defense that is similar to federal law. The affirmative defense would address a situation where a person finds child pornography on their computer, and did not obtain it themselves. The defense requires that there are three or less depictions, and the person, without showing the material to another person except law enforcement, destroys the depictions or contacts law enforcement and turns it over to them.

Sections 8, 9, and 10 amend the crime that prohibits the electronic distribution of indecent material to minors by expanding the offense to prohibit any distribution of indecent material to minors.

Section 11 adds the crimes of human trafficking in the first and second degrees, distribution of child pornography, possession of child pornography, and distribution of indecent materials to minors to the crimes that are not eligible for a suspended imposition of sentence.

Section 11 also includes an amendment that removes “substantially” when describing a crime in another jurisdiction that may be a predicate conviction that would disallow the use of a suspended imposition of sentence for other offenses. This conforms with other statutes that require that a predicate offense in another jurisdiction be only similar to an offense in Alaska. Examples include AS 12.55.145(a) (presumptive sentencing), AS 11.41.320(a)(5) (third degree assault), and AS 11.41.110(a)(5) (murder in the second degree).

Section 12 adds to the conditions of probation that may be imposed on a person convicted of a sex offense. It gives the court discretion to order the person to submit e-mail addresses and other networking addresses to his or her probation officer, who would be required to give this information to the Troopers and to the local law enforcement agency. If the person was convicted of sexual abuse of a minor or an offense related to child pornography, it gives the court discretion to prohibit the person from using an Internet site, communicating with children under 16 years of age, or possessing or using a computer.

Section 13 amends the aggravating factor at sentencing that allows the court to increase a sentence above the sentencing range if the defendant knew that the victim was particularly vulnerable. It does this by adding the consumption of alcohol or drugs as factors that might make a victim particularly vulnerable.

Section 14 adds two new aggravating factors to the sentencing law. First, it allows the court to increase a sentence above the sentencing range for a crime against a person (AS 11.41) committed against a person that the defendant was dating or with whom the defendant has engaged in a sexual relationship. Second, it allows the court to increase the sentence if the defendant is convicted of sexual abuse of a minor in the second degree under AS 11.41.436(a)(2) (a person 16 years of age or older having sexual contact with a child under 13 years old), if the defendant is 18 years old or older.

Section 15 adds a new provision to sex offender registration law that requires a person present in Alaska, who is convicted of an offense out of state that requires registration in that jurisdiction, to register in Alaska. This requirement would apply even if Alaska does not have a criminal provision similar to the crime in the other state that requires registration there.

Section 16 amends Rule 16(b)(1)(A) by prohibiting the copying of child pornography as part of the discovery process in a criminal prosecution. It would allow defense counsel, the defendant, and defense experts to examine the material, but it must be kept in the custody and control of a law enforcement agency or the prosecuting authority. Federal law has a similar provision. 18 U.S.C.A. § 3509(m).

Sections 17 and 18 include the applicability and effective date provisions.