



# Representative Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Legislature

District 1 Fairbanks

## House Bill 55 Sponsor Statement

*"An Act relating to compensation for wrongful conviction and imprisonment."*

With increasing technology, DNA exonerations have been on the rise. There have been 325 post-conviction DNA exonerations with the vast majority coming since 2000. Each of these individuals spent time behind bars, an average of 13.6 years, and was released into a changed world. House Bill 55 gives these wrongfully imprisoned victims a chance to start a new life and integrate back into society.

Specifically, HB 55 creates an administrative process whereby victims of overturned criminal convictions can request compensation from the state for time served. They can be compensated up to \$50,000 per year with a cap at two million dollars. In order to qualify for the compensation, the claimant must have served time in prison and then have been exonerated via retrial, dismissed charges, or executive pardon because of innocence.

While there is no price on the emotional and personal suffering of those who were wrongfully imprisoned, HB 55 would bring Alaska up to the federal compensation standard to help right the state's wrong. Financial compensation would help victims of wrongful imprisonment repair their lives by covering costs of education, healthcare, housing and transportation.

This legislation will right the state's wrongs. Every innocent person, regardless of how they became incarcerated, deserves just compensation for the time they wrongly served. HB 55 is a stepping stone in a long process towards protecting all Alaskans.

###