

Alaska State Legislature

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SENATE BILL 91

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Omnibus Criminal Law & Procedure; Corrections
Version N

Senate Bill 91 implements proven practices to reduce recidivism, keep Alaskans safe, hold offenders accountable, and control corrections spending.

Increased spending on prisons has not brought Alaskans greater public safety: nearly two out of every three inmates who leave prison return to prison within three years. The high rate of recidivism has significantly increased Department of Corrections operating costs to \$324 million in FY 2016, and spurred the opening of the Goose Creek Correctional Center, costing the state \$240 million in construction funds.

Alaska Criminal Justice Commission

Seeking a better public safety return on our state's corrections spending, the legislature established the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission. The Commission included legislators, judges, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, defenders, corrections officials, and members representing crime victims and Alaska Natives. The Commission spent over a year conducting an exhaustive review of the state's pretrial, sentencing, corrections, and community supervision data and systems.

SB 91 Incorporates the Commission's Recommendations

The Commission developed a package of consensus recommendations that will reduce the state's daily prison population by 21 percent over the next 10 years, saving the state \$424 million. SB 91 aims to:

- **Implement evidence-based pretrial practices** by expanding the use of citations in lieu of arrest for lower-level nonviolent offenses; and making changes to bail practices to focus pretrial release decisions more on risk than on ability to pay.

- **Focus prison beds on serious and violent offenders** by diverting nonviolent misdemeanor offenders to alternatives; revising drug crime penalties; adjusting dollar amounts for felony property crimes to account for inflation; realigning sentence ranges in statute, expanding and streamlining parole; and incentivizing sex offenders to complete treatment programming.
- **Strengthen probation and parole supervision** by standardizing sanctions for violations of probation and parole conditions to ensure they are swift, certain, and proportional; establishing incentives to comply with supervision conditions; and focusing treatment resources on high-needs offenders.
- **Improve opportunities for successful reentry** by offering limited licenses to eligible revoked offenders; creating a reentry program within the Department of Corrections; and opting out of the federal ban on food stamps for people convicted of drug crimes.
- **Reinvest** a portion of the savings from these reforms into evidence-based practices designed to improve public safety, control corrections populations, and reduce recidivism, including supervision services, victims' services, violence prevention, treatment services, and reentry services.

Cost of Doing Nothing: \$169 Million

Alaska's prison population grew 27 percent in the last decade, nearly three times faster than the resident population. At this rate, the Department of Corrections projects the need to house an additional 1,416 inmates by 2024, which will cost the state at least \$169 million in new spending. With the disappointing recidivism rates and public safety outcomes the state has been achieving, the cost of doing nothing is too high. I ask for your support.

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