

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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## SENATOR Tom Begich SENATE DISTRICT J

### Senate Bill 184 Sponsor Statement

*“An Act restricting the release of certain records of convictions; relating to criminal history information for state employment applications; amending Rule 37.6, Alaska Rules of Administration; and providing for an effective date.”*

Senate Bill 184 would make confidential the records of individuals who have been convicted of minor marijuana crimes, and no other crime. In 2014, Alaskans voted to legalize the cultivation, sales, and possession of marijuana for those 21 years old or older. This legislation led to a robust and growing marijuana industry, but some Alaskans remain blocked from employment and housing by previous marijuana possession.

According to a report by Legislative Research, between 2007 and 2017 there were more than 700 Alaskans convicted of low level marijuana crimes. Those convictions can make obtaining housing and gainful employment challenging, even though marijuana possession would not be a crime today.

Further, Senate Bill 184 would prevent the State from asking if someone has been convicted of a felony on a job application, with an exclusion for any position related to the criminal justice field. This type of 'ban the box' legislation has been shown to reduce barriers to gainful, full-time employment, amongst the most important factors in reducing recidivism.

Now that voters have legalized marijuana, this legislation would allow those previously convicted to move on with their lives, while ensuring those in the criminal justice field still have access to needed background information.

Thank you for your consideration.

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