

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

CS for House Bill 20

"An Act relating to sexual assault; requiring law enforcement agencies to test sexual assault examination kits; requiring notification of completion of testing; relating to reports on untested sexual assault examination kits; and providing for an effective date."

Sponsor Statement

Alaska's sexual crime rates are three times higher than the national average, and child sexual assault rates are six times the national average. Strengthening and clarifying our language around sexual assault moves Alaska closer to being able to prosecute heinous crimes and work towards ending this pattern. Sexual Assault Kits have been backlogged for years with thousands of kits going untested and justice not being served. This bill seeks to create a realistic yet aggressive timeline for kits to be turned over to the crime lab, tested by the state, and then requires notification of the victim that testing has been completed. Victim notification helps lessen the heavy burden of not knowing the progress of a case and moves towards closure for victims. This bill also requires the yearly reporting of the backlog of sexual assault kits to include more detail about the numbers of kits that are going untested and the reasons why that might be.

According to a Fall 2018 report from the Alaska Department of Public Safety, to the Alaska Legislature, there is a backlog of 2,568 untested rape kits. With the passage of this bill, rape kits would no longer go untested and be forgotten but be accounted for in every case with greater accountability and timeliness.

This bill seeks to finish what began as an attempt to address the enormous backlog of untested sexual assault kits and ensure more accountability from law enforcement and the crime lab as well as provide more information to victims and the public.