

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ZACK FIELDS

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Sponsor Summary for HB 187 version E

House Bill 187 would prohibit shipment of prisoners out of state, with narrow exceptions related to medical treatment needs. In order to reduce crime and recidivism rates, and to fulfill its correctional mission, the Department must work with community partners to provide job training and re-entry services.

Since 95% of inmates will re-enter our communities, it is in our interest to maximize the number of re-entrants who can find a job and housing, and ultimately achieve independence.

Evidence from Alaska and other states, and testimony presented to legislative committees clearly indicate that shipment of prisoners out of state increases recidivism and crime rates.

Incarceration Outside prevents inmates from staying connected with their families, and makes re-entry planning into their home Alaska community far more difficult. For-profit prisons have a record of understaffing and lack of training and rehabilitative services that contribute to high recidivism rates.

The Anchorage Assembly reaffirmed its opposition to private prisons, and many other cities from Delta Junction to Kenai have voted against establishing such prisons in their boundaries. Private prisons have been banned or discontinued by 22 states.

Studies show private prisons often understaff facilities in an effort to boost profits. This can promote the rise of criminal gangs as vulnerable prisoners seek protection. Prior contracted prisons outside of Alaska greatly increased the risk to Alaska Native prisoners as targets of violence and discrimination and have contributed to white supremacist gangs taking root in Alaska. As Governor Murkowski noted when the state terminated shipment of prisoners Outside in 2006, in-state incarceration with rehabilitation improves public safety while reducing costs associated with recidivism.