

# One-year goal nearly reached, new bill would halve test time of sex assault kits

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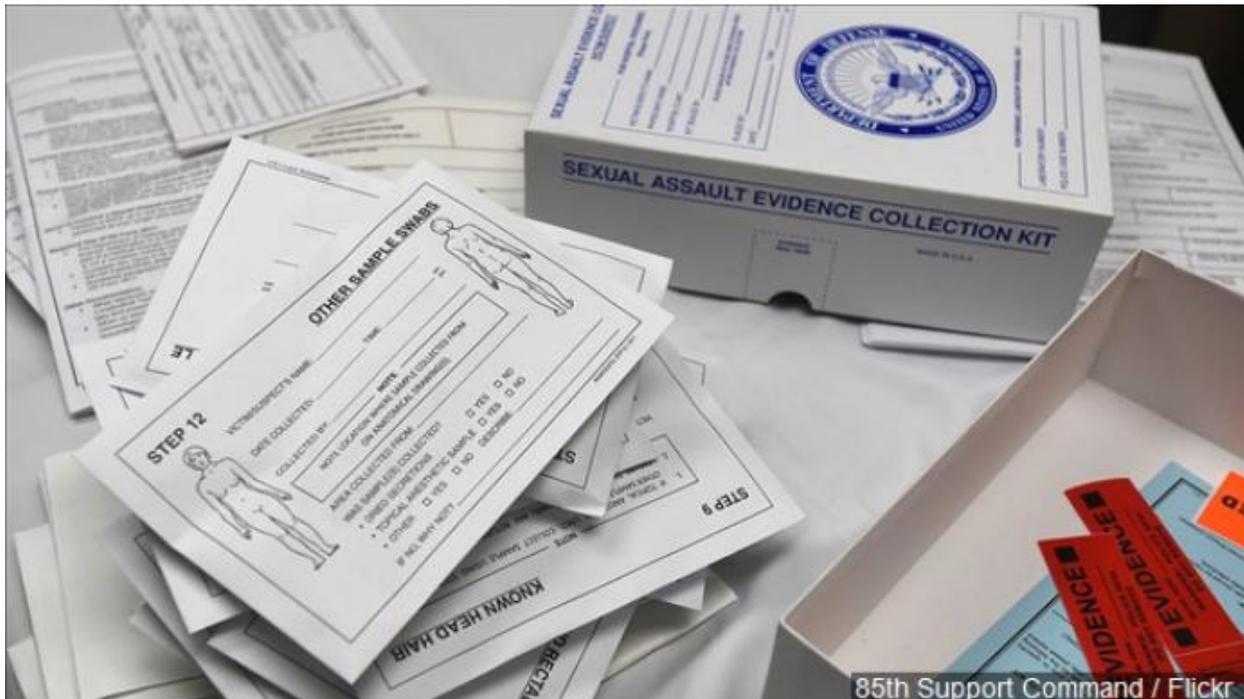
By [Matt Leseman](#) |

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**ANCHORAGE (KTUU)** - Untested sexual assault kits have been a point of discussion in Alaska for [several years](#), and the state [has taken several actions](#) to reduce the backlog, both of older kits, and ones currently being sent in.



Last Summer, Rep. Geran Tarr, D-Anchorage, passed a piece of legislation putting a 1-year cap on the amount of time a newly submitted kit could go untested.

“When I started working on rape kit reform about four years ago, I learned that it was taking more than two years, longer in some cases, for these kits to be processed,” Rep. Tarr said.

Since the law passed, the Department of Public Safety's Scientific Crime Detection Lab has expanded personnel to meet that cap.

"One of the issues has been having enough capacity at the crime lab to process the sexual assault examination kits," Tarr said. "By putting in a one-year requirement, it allowed hiring of additional staff to meet that requirement, and that takes some time."

The deadline to meet that one-year goal is Jan. 1, but the Department of Public Safety said they're mostly there.

"At this point in time, the Department of Public Safety's crime lab is right at the one-year turnaround time," said DPS Communications Director Megan Peters. "By-and-large we are meeting it."

Now, Tarr is looking to cut that wait time in half.

"The next step is to get it down to 6 months," she said.

However, that new cap would likely require more personnel at the crime lab, and more funding to pay for it.

"Any type of change from what it currently is now, since we are just meeting it, there would definitely have to be a consideration of what resources we have in place," Peters said.

Exact details, though, are hard to guess until DPS sees the legislation.

"Once the bill is actually filed and lists those details, we can analyze it in depth and take a look at the totality of the situation."

That legislation has been pre-filed by Tarr, and she's eager to get to it.

"Any delay means we've missed an opportunity to get a dangerous person off our streets, and make our community safer," Tarr said. "And it's hard for me to put a price tag on that."

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