



ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES  
2023 ANNUAL CONVENTION  
RESOLUTION 23-07

- TITLE:** A RESOLUTION REQUESTING AN INDEPENDENT FEDERAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE DISPROPORTIONATE PRISON DEATHS OF ALASKA NATIVE PEOPLE HELD IN THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS CUSTODY
- WHEREAS:** The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska, and its membership includes 179 federally recognized tribes, 154 village corporations, 9 regional corporations, and 10 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs; and
- WHEREAS:** The mission of AFN is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic, and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community; and
- WHEREAS:** In 2022, Alaska Native people made up 22% of the state population yet accounted for 41.22% of Alaska’s incarcerated population; and
- WHEREAS:** In 2022, a record number of eighteen people died in Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) custody, half of whom were Alaska Native, and eight of nine from Alaska Native villages, and seven of these deaths were by suicide; and
- WHEREAS:** Not only are Alaska Natives disproportionately represented in Alaska’s incarcerated population, but Alaska Native people are dying in prison in even more disproportionate numbers; and
- WHEREAS:** People should not die in prison unless serving a life or equivalent sentence; and
- WHEREAS:** The current trend is of great concern and, therefore, should be investigated independent from the State of Alaska by a neutral entity to ensure objectivity and avoid conflicts of interest; and
- WHEREAS:** The investigation should provide a thorough accounting of all deaths in custody, including causes of death, how each person’s health was assessed, conditions and circumstances of their confinement, and availability and delivery of healthcare prior to death; and
- WHEREAS:** The investigation should identify how these deaths in custody could have been prevented through both individual actions and systemic changes; and
- WHEREAS:** The investigation should identify whether language barriers or staff misconduct played a part in any of these deaths in custody; and

WHEREAS: The investigation should identify whether any of the people who died were eligible for, or had applied for, compassionate release or special medical parole and whether they were in pre-trial, remand, or sentenced status; and

WHEREAS: The investigators should make their report public to ensure transparency and accountability, so community members can work with state leaders to solve issues that contribute to deaths in custody.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2023 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives stand together and are unified in our efforts to advocate for fair and equitable treatment of Alaska Native people within the justice system; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2023 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives publicly support and call on the United States Attorney for Alaska to initiate an independent investigation of the deaths of Alaska Native prisoners who have died in the Department of Corrections custody.

SUBMITTED BY: THE AFN COUNCIL FOR ADVANCEMENT OF ALASKA NATIVES

COMMITTEE ACTION: DO PASS

BOARD ACTION: DO PASS

CONVENTION ACTION: AMENDED AND ADOPTED ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2023