

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 27, 2023

1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Matt Claman, Chair
Senator Jesse Kiehl, Vice Chair
Senator James Kaufman
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Löki Tobin

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: UNIFORM CRIME REPORT ANALYSIS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

TROY PAYNE, Associate Professor
Justice Center
University of Alaska Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the Uniform Crime Report analysis.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:31:44 PM](#)

CHAIR MATT CLAMAN called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kiehl, Kaufman, Giessel, Tobin and Chair Claman.

PRESENTATION: UNIFORM CRIME REPORT ANALYSIS

[1:32:33 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced the consideration of the Uniform Crime Report presentation.

TROY PAYNE, Associate Professor Justice Center, University of Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, introduced himself.

MR. PAYNE began the presentation on the Uniform Crime Report with slide 2, "Alaska Justice Information Center."

We compile, analyze, and report on criminal justice topics to policymakers and practitioners to improve public safety, increase criminal justice system accountability, and reduce recidivism

We specialize in quantitative data analysis, analysis of agency data, data visualization, integration of data, program evaluation, and statistical modeling

[1:34:35 PM](#)

MR. PAYNE continued with slide 3, "Today's Presentation."

Brief description of the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program

Visual presentation of FBI UCR data for Alaska compared to nationwide averages

Description of Alaska data over time

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 4, "The FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) changed in 2021."

- After years of notice, the FBI UCR program fully transitioned to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) in 2021.
- This new data is much more detailed than prior summary UCR data.
- During the transition, national data may not be comparable to data reported by the Alaska Department of Public Safety.
- Alaska DPS has taken pains to continue to report summary data in a format similar to prior years.
- We can compare Alaska to itself over time but comparing 2021 Alaska numbers to nationwide is not advised.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked why the Anchorage data were omitted. He wondered if the legislature could expect the information at a later time.

MR. PAYNE replied that the answer lies with the Anchorage Police Department (APD). He stated that APD was upgrading data systems for National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) compliance. He was unsure about the projected timeline. He relayed that NIBRS compliance requires an update to Information Technology systems for an agency the size of APD. He added that APD was one of the largest police departments in the country and information technology (IT) projects can be complicated and extensive for sizable agencies.

SENATOR KIEHL wondered if other large police departments in the nation face similar challenges.

MR. PAYNE relayed that many large police departments successfully implement NIBRS compliance. He noted that 2021 data were incomplete because many agencies lack NIBRS compliance and are eliminated from the data.

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SENATOR TOBIN asked if NIBRS compliance impacted public safety.

MR. PAYNE clarified that Anchorage data were included in the Crime in Alaska Report from the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Anchorage data is omitted from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) NIBRS site. He was unaware of other states participation in the database. He clarified that accurate data will be available in a few years following the complete transition.

SENATOR TOBIN anticipated learning more about the impact when data became available.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked about Alaskan crime data trends. He claimed that the state is experiencing historic lows.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 5, "UCR Offenses."

- Because it's meant as a national benchmark, the UCR has specific definitions of offenses that do not always align with state statutes.

- In the classic UCR data collection, agency staff classify offenses and report offense counts to DPS.
- In NIBRS, detailed incident-based data are transmitted through the agency's information technology systems.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 6, "UCR Offenses."

Violent

- Murder
- Robbery
- Rape
- Aggravated Assault

Property

- Burglary
- Motor Vehicle Theft
- Larceny-Theft
- Arson

[1:48:29 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN asked about interpersonal violence that does not result in rape or murder. She wondered how the data is categorized for domestic and interpersonal violence.

MR. PAYNE replied that the degree of injury determines the categorization. He stated that domestic violence that is categorized as aggravated assault is classified as an aggravated assault. He clarified that an unlawful attack without inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury would be classified as a simple assault. He added that the Unified Crime Reporting (UCR) did not have a domestic violence designation. The NIBRS shows an advantage over UCR because it displays details that are unavailable in the older data system.

SENATOR TOBIN wondered how to compare interpersonal violence rates in other states. She was relieved to hear that NIBRS will eventually offer the legislature valuable data for future extrapolation.

MR. PAYNE replied that the state had other sources of information. He remarked that UCR statistics include crimes known to police. For some crimes, such as domestic violence and sexual assault, reporting rates are relatively low. Other means

for understanding those phenomena exist via programs like the Alaska Victimization Survey.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked if the UCR covers simple assault or aggravated assault statistics.

MR. PAYNE replied that the classic UCR includes arrests but not the number of simple assault offenses.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 7 "All Offenses Known to Police (Violent and Property) Rate per 100,000 Residents Alaska and Nationwide." The graph depicts the crimes listed on slide 6. The graph showed the number of offences multiplied by 100,000. Results from 1979 to 2021 show an overall decline in all crime measures. The rates per 100,000 residents show an overall decline. He noted that all crime is lower than forty years ago nationwide

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CHAIR CLAMAN asked about factors leading to the decline in crime in Alaska and nationwide.

MR. PAYNE replied that he does not know the combination of factors that led to the decline. He explained that the remainder of the presentation details the different types of crime to better understand the decline. He remarked that the largest decline was seen in property crime, but the reasons are unknown. He noted that academic criminologists lacked consensus about the driving factors for the decline. The decline in crime is seen on a global scale.

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SENATOR GIESSEL asked when the legislature passed Senate Bill 91. She stated that a time period might help inform the committee about the legislation's effect on crime.

MR. PAYNE replied that Senate Bill 91 passed in 2016.

CHAIR CLAMAN agreed that Senate Bill 91 passed in 2016. He reminded the committee that nine pieces of public safety related legislation had passed since 2016. The additional legislation makes it difficult to assess the impact of a particular bill.

SENATOR GIESSEL viewed the graph and understood the motivation to pass Senate Bill 91. She recalled that the bill was repealed.

She wondered about the impact of the bill and the repeal on crime rates.

CHAIR CLAMAN stated that the public believes that the legislature repealed Senate Bill 91, however, several sections remain. He saw the legislative effort as a rollback rather than a repeal.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked about the blue dots depicted on the graph. He asked if the graph spanned to 2019 or 2020.

MR. PAYNE replied that the furthest blue dot was 2021. He admitted that he created the charts quickly.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked if both the Alaska and nationwide categories spanned to 2021.

MR. PAYNE explained that the last nationwide data point (orange) was 2020 while the last Alaska data point (blue) spanned through 2021. He noted that state data is compiled efficiently through DPS.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 9, "Property Offenses Known to Police Rate per 100,000 Residents Alaska and Nationwide." Property crime received its own category. Property crime includes burglary, motor vehicle theft, larceny theft and arson. He noted that property crime, not violent crime, comprises the majority of crime, both in the state and nationwide.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 10, "Burglary Offenses Known to Police." The overall trend for burglary has been down since 1979. He noted an uptick through 2017, but Alaska saw a downward trend since.

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MR. PAYNE moved to slide 11, "Larceny Offenses Known to Police Rate per 100,000 Residents Alaska and Nationwide." He noted a similar decline in larceny. He remarked that larceny is the least serious property crime. The nationwide trend has been lower since the early nineties.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 12, "Motor Vehicle Theft Offenses Known to Police Rate per 100,000 Residents Alaska and

Nationwide." He announced the dramatic increase in motor vehicle theft in 2015-2020. The increase began prior to Senate Bill 91. The spike may result from a diffusion of innovation among motor vehicle thieves. He surmised that people found better ways to steal cars.

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CHAIR CLAMAN asked about the term diffusion of innovation.

MR. PAYNE replied that diffusion of innovation involves a new way of doing something and everybody learns from it. He was unsure what drove the dramatic increase in motor vehicle thefts. Levels dropped dramatically and he suspected that law enforcement adequately addressed a small group of criminals engaged in motor vehicle thefts.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked about distinguishing trends related to motor vehicle thefts in the municipality of Anchorage.

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MR. PAYNE replied no, he had not detailed the Anchorage data separately.

CHAIR CLAMAN requested the data about Anchorage's motor vehicle theft rates. He theorized that the drop in vehicle thefts resulted from funding increases for the Anchorage Police Department. He wondered if additional data might prove the distinction between the municipality of Anchorage and the rest of the state.

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MR. PAYNE stated that those data are available through DPS. The department reports by agency allowing for separate municipality data. He added that the Alaska State Troopers are recorded as one entity, making it difficult to compare trends with other areas of the state.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 14, "Violent Offenses Known to Police Rate per 100,000 Residents Alaska and Nationwide." He stated that the state saw higher than average violent crimes since 1994. He commented on the value of disaggregating violent crime into its constituent pieces.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 15, "Homicide Offenses Known to Police Rate per 100,000 Residents Alaska and Nationwide." He

stated that Alaska saw a small number of homicides. Alaska's homicide rates are slightly higher than the national rates.

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MR. PAYNE moved to slide 16, "Rape (Revised Definition) Offenses Known to Police Rate per 100,000 Residents Alaska and Nationwide." He remarked that the rate of rape in Alaska is three to four times higher than the national average. The graph spans from 2013 through 2021 because the definition of rape changed in 2013. Data drawn from the prior definition of rape is largely the same. The crimes depicted on the graph are known to police. He mentioned that data from the Alaska Victimization Survey shows higher rates than those surveyed in the Lower 48. All of the evidence shows that rates of rape and sexual assault are dramatically higher in Alaska than they are in the rest of the country.

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SENATOR KIEHL agreed that victimization is higher in Alaska. He wondered if reporting is better in Alaska.

MR. PAYNE offered to confer with a colleague who runs the Alaska Victimization Survey. It's run every five years since 2010. He recalled that reporting remained static over the time period but agreed to obtain an accurate answer.

SENATOR KIEHL appreciated the information. He hoped that the reporting played a role, but he wished to know for certain.

CHAIR CLAMAN stated that he witnessed a presentation from Dr. Ingrid Johnson from the University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center. The presentation provided the reporting information. He offered to invite Dr. Johnson to testify before the committee.

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MR. PAYNE agreed that Dr. Johnson was the expert on the Alaska Victimization Survey.

CHAIR CLAMAN stated that he would invite Dr. Johnson to provide a presentation to the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 17, "Robbery Offenses Known to Police Rate per 100,000 Residents Alaska and Nationwide." He remarked that Alaska robbery rates were significantly lower than the national average until approximately 2015. He recommended avoiding causal arguments about the rates and time periods. He

added that Senate Bill 91 passed after the spike in robberies was detected. Nationwide robbery rates have declined since the late 1980s.

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SENATOR TOBIN asked about robberies on federal land. She wondered if the federal land data was included in the graph.

MR. PAYNE replied no, however an advancement in NIBRS allows for inclusion of federal land crimes. He expressed uncertainty about the current Alaska data related to crimes committed on Federal Land. He assumed that offenses on federal land were uncommon.

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CHAIR CLAMAN asked if NIBRS would contain the crime data on federal lands but it wouldn't come from state agencies.

MR. PAYNE deferred the question to DPS.

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MR. PAYNE moved to slide 18, "Aggravated Assault Offenses Known to Police Rate per 100,000 Residents Alaska and Nationwide." He remarked that aggravated assault rates are higher in Alaska since 1993. He pointed to an increase in 2014 through 2018. Aggravated assaults show different trends relative to nationwide rates. Aggravated assault is defined as an assault with a weapon or an assault likely to cause great bodily harm. The difference between an aggravated assault and a homicide can be the victim's proximity to a trauma center.

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MR. PAYNE moved to slide 19, "Summary."

- Crime has been generally trending down since the 1980s.
- Property offences are far more common than violent offenses, and property offenses therefore drive the all offenses trend.
- Separating all offenses known to police into specific offenses gives a more nuanced view into crime trends.

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MR. PAYNE continued with slide 20, "Summary- Property Offences."

- After a slight increase in the mid-2010's, burglary and larceny have been trending down since 2018.
- After a large increase in the mid-2010's, motor vehicle theft has been trending down since 2018.
- In both trend and magnitude, Alaska is similar to the national average for property offenses.

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MR. PAYNE moved to slide 21, "Summary- Violent offenses."

- Alaska has consistently had a higher than average rates of violence since 1993.
- This difference is driven by rates of:
 - rape at 3-4 X the national average; and
 - aggravated assault, at 2x the national average.

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SENATOR KAUFMAN asked about slide 7 and all offenses known to police. He mentioned a time when Alaskans left doors unlocked and keys in their cars. He wondered about trends in reporting crimes changing the perception of an increased crime rate.

MR. PAYNE replied that statistics displayed more crime before people began locking doors. He argued that the increases in crime reporting leads to less crime over time because it leads people to take greater precautions. He pointed to consistent research showing that actual crime and perception of crime do not align.

SENATOR KAUFMAN discussed correlation versus causation. He noted the peak on slide 7 illustrates the overall crime rates in 2017. He shared a personal story about neighborhood crime.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked about references to past legislation. He wondered about other correlations that might explain peaks in crime.

MR. PAYNE commented on the difficulty correlating information from the summary level. He used larceny as an example. Larceny includes shoplifting, purse snatching, motor vehicle thefts, motor vehicle parts theft, bicycle theft, theft from coin operated devices and all other thefts. The different components of larceny might benefit from a wide variety of policy solutions. He stated that NIBRS provides significant detail, which will be available soon in Alaska.

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CHAIR CLAMAN recalled a common discussion related to crime trends and economic health was that as the economy strengthens and employment increase, crime trends go down.

MR. PAYNE said he know for sure but he believes that the relation between greater economic health and decreased crime trends is true nationally, but he was unsure about an Alaskan correlation. The differences between in-migration versus out-migration may be relevant.

CHAIR CLAMAN expressed appreciation for the presentation.

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There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Claman adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 2:33 p.m.