

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 14, 2025

1:25 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Andrew Gray, Chair
Representative Chuck Kopp, Vice Chair
Representative Ted Eischeid
Representative Genevieve Mina
Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Mia Costello
Representative Jubilee Underwood

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S): CRIME TRENDS IN ALASKA

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

BRAD MYRSTOL, Director
Justice Information Center
University of Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the Crime Trends in Alaska presentation.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:25:24 PM](#)

CHAIR ANDREW GRAY called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:25 p.m. Representatives Underwood, Costello, Mina, Eischeid, Vance, Kopp, and Gray were present at the call to order.

PRESENTATION(S): Crime Trends in Alaska

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CHAIR GRAY announced that the only order of business would be the Crime Trends in Alaska presentation.

[1:27:13 PM](#)

BRAD MYRSTOL, Chair/Director, Justice Information Center (JIA), University of Alaska (UA), presented a PowerPoint, titled "Alaska Crime Rate Trends 1985-2023" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He discussed the data source: Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), which is a program managed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). He highlighted rates of property crime and violent crime in Alaska from 1985-2023, noting the linear decline in property crime rates and the flat rate of violent crimes since 1993. In response to a series of committee questions, he said the data is inclusive of population changes and the increase in violent crimes from 1985 to 1996 mirrors national trends.

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MR. MYRSTOL continued the presentation with an analysis of UCR crime trends, characterizing them as a "mixed bag." He highlighted property crime rates in Alaska from 1985 to 2023, explaining that the property crime composite is dominated by larceny and theft and the disaggregated trends show a consistent decline. In response to a series of committee questions, he cautioned against trying to pinpoint one specific causal factor, as crime rates usually correlate to a variety of factors. Nonetheless, he theorized that the increase from 2016 through 2020 may be related to the opioid epidemic. He stated that the violent crime composite is dominated by aggravated assault, and without it, rates of rape, robbery, and criminal homicide are variable. In response to a question about differences in the definition of rape, he explained that in 2013, UCR broadened its definition to be much more inclusive of the victim population by including males and widely expanding the menu of offenses. He said the changes made to the UCR in 2013 was more reflective of Alaska statutes, adding that the legacy definition of rape was woefully inadequate to capture the volume of rape occurring in any jurisdiction.

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MR. MYRSTOL discussed the robbery rate from 1985 to 2023 and highlighted a spike in the mid-1980s to 1990s, which corresponds with national trends, followed by a second spike around 2015. He hypothesized that the correlation between the opioid epidemic and robbery rates is something to be explored. In response to committee questions, he said it's plausible to create a linkage between the state's economic health and crime and expounded on dynamics that may be impactful to rates of violence in a community, such as unemployment. He highlighted the low prevalence of criminal homicide relative to other violent crimes. Overall, since 2000, there has been a persistent flat trend in the violent crime rate. He offered a comparison of Alaska's crime trends versus the United States in 2023, noting that Alaska's violent crime composite rate is 543 percent higher than that of the U.S, whereas Alaska's property crime composite only makes up 84.5 percent of the U.S.

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MR. MYRSTOL, in response to a series of committee questions, said accessing the data from the archive would make it possible to calculate variances and a standard error to identify a statistically significant difference. He agreed that there may not be a statistically significant difference in property crimes; however, he confidently stated that there would be a statistical difference in rape and aggravated assault. He said it would be difficult to provide a breakdown of the data by region because the Alaska State Troopers (AST) report as an agency.

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MR. MYRSTOL gave a synopsis of the overall takeaway: a downward trend in statewide property crime rates; persistently high rates of violent crime rates since 2000 and abnormally high rates of rape and aggravated assault since 2023. He highlighted the compelling temporal and comparative patterns in the data, which suggest that Alaska's crime problem may be a violent crime problem. He offered several caveats, explaining that the UCR is not well suited for measuring the prevalence of crime, but works well for trend analysis. He added that the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) isn't perfect either, as crime is highly contextual. He stated that Alaska would benefit greatly from a statewide NCVS-type crime victimization survey; however this is a national crime rate and does not provide for state-level estimates.

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MR. MYRSTOL turned attention to the Alaska Victimization Survey (AVS) and discussed the measurement of rape/sexual assault in Alaska. He said a lack of reporting makes it difficult to provide services to survivors of rape and sexual assault, design and implement prevention initiatives, and offer other accountability measures. Consequently, the victimization survey was designed to provide estimates of victimization prevalence and how many people experience rape and or sexual assault. He gave an overview of the AVS methodology, which uses a statewide telephonic survey. He overviewed the estimated percentage of adult women in Alaska who experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence (SV) composites. Overall in 2020, 6.9 percent of adult Alaskan women, or 18,314 women, experienced intimate partner violence and 3.4 percent, or 8,791 women, experienced sexual violence.

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MR. MYRSTOL, in response to committee questions, said including incarcerated women in the AVS would require a different methodology and would be costly and difficult to perform. He clarified that their voices are valued; however, it would create significant mythological challenges. He confirmed that [the AVS] would be conducted in 2025 with reporting released in summer or fall of 2026. He shared the example of a Boston policy change related to gun control and how that initiative was implemented, resulting in marked success.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:49 p.m.