

HB

171

<TARGET><BILL>HB 171</BILL><SUBJECT>HB
171</SUBJECT><COMM>HL&C30</COMM></TARGET>


Alaska State Legislature

Contact:
State Capitol Rm 24
Phone: (907) 465-3473
Representative.dean.westlake@akleg.gov



Special Committee on Arctic, Economic Development,
and Tourism, Chair
Resources Committee, Vice Chair
Community and Regional Affairs Committee
Special Committee on Energy

Representative Dean Westlake

TO: Rep. Sam Kito III, Chairman, House Labor and Commerce Committee
FROM: Representative Westlake 
DATE: March 20, 2017
RE: Hearing Request for HB 171

Dear Chairman:

I humbly request a hearing of HB 171 in the House Labor and Commerce Committee at your earliest convenience. Attached is a bill packet that contains the following:

- 1) HB 171 Sponsor Statement
- 2) HB 171 version A
- 3) HB 171 Support Letter DOC Commissioner
- 4) HB 171 Support Letter – more forthcoming

Staff contact in my office for this bill will be Elizabeth Rexford, who can be reached at (907) 465-3473 or Elizabeth.Rexford@akleg.gov.

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HB 171 Sponsor Statement

"An Act authorizing the commissioner of corrections to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements for the productive employment of prisoners; authorizing the Department of Corrections to receive money from the productive employment of prisoners; and providing for an effective date."

In Alaska, over 90 percent of those incarcerated will return to our communities. It is important that we allow these individuals to develop the skills necessary to be successful as they reenter into society. As the State Department of Corrections (DOC) works to create a more self-sustaining correctional system, the current language in AS 33.30.191(b) is too narrow. HB 171 will enhance the ability of the Commissioner to accept contracts or cooperative agreements in order to strengthen the current employment of Alaskan prisoners.

This legislation will allow the Commissioner greater latitude to contract with entities to provide the department with expertise on producing various products and services. DOC would then be able to provide products and services to the general public through private-public partnerships in full consultation with industry stakeholders. Alaskans will benefit by an enhanced ability to purchase quality services and Alaskan made products that may not otherwise be available in the area. Further, HB 171 broadens the stakeholders that the Commissioner shall consult with before selling a product/service, thus, providing better outcomes for DOC, industry stakeholders, and the public.

Correctional employment programs are used throughout the country and Alaska's current system pales in comparison. Colorado, Nevada, and Oregon are a few examples of states that are actively employing inmates, providing a better quality of life during incarceration for those employed, and providing better chances for successful reentry into society after incarceration. Inmates in Alaska should also be provided opportunities to gain work experience, be productive with their time, and learn new skills.

Enhancement of prisoner employment will provide more opportunities to find savings within the correctional system. Warehousing inmates is detrimental to the well-being of society and has residual cost burdens. Providing meaningful, productive programs to inmates during incarceration is of tremendous benefit. Safety within the institutions will be enhanced by reducing inmate idleness. Victim restitution, court fees/fines, and other costs associated with confinement will have more opportunities of being paid which enhances opportunities for restorative justice to take place.

HB 171 strengthens the State's efforts in reducing recidivism. The residual effects of improving correctional employment programs could manifest in increased institutional efficiencies, increased skilled workers for Alaska's workforce, reduced recidivism, reduced victimization, and enhanced public safety. The State is currently facing fiscal pressures and must get creative in looking for solutions. HB 171 increases the Department of Corrections' ability to meet their core mission of 'providing secure confinement, reformatory programs, and a process of supervised community reintegration to enhance the safety of our communities.'

For more information please contact Elizabeth Rexford on my staff at 907-465-3473.

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2017 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 171
Fiscal Note Number: _____
() Publish Date: _____

Identifier: HB171-DOC-IDO-03-31-17
Title: EMPLOYMENT OF PRISONERS
Sponsor: WESTLAKE
Requester: (H) Labor & Commerce

Department: Department of Corrections
Appropriation: Population Management
Allocation: Institution Director's Office
OMB Component Number: 1381

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2018 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2018 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
OPERATING EXPENDITURES								
Personal Services								
Travel								
Services								
Commodities								
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits								
Miscellaneous								
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None								
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time								
Part-time								
Temporary								

Change in Revenues

None								
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2017) cost: 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2018) cost: 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:

Not applicable, initial version.

Prepared By:	April Wilkerson	Phone:	(907)465-3460
Division:	Administrative Services - Department of Corrections	Date:	03/31/2017 05:00 PM
Approved By:	Dean Williams, Commissioner	Date:	03/31/17
Agency:	Department of Corrections		

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB171

Analysis

This legislation is repealing and reenacting AS 33.30.191(b) providing statutory authority for the Commissioner of Corrections to enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with public agencies, private organizations, or individuals for the productive employment of prisoners. This legislation also allows the commissioner to sell products or services to a public agency, private industry, or individuals as well as requires the commissioner to determine the prices at which the products and services are to be sold.

Passage of this legislation would provide opportunities to inmates to receive actual employment experience, be productive while serving their time, and allow them to learn new skills. The public would also benefit by being able to purchase quality product or services that may not otherwise be available in the area.

This legislation will have no immediate financial impact on the Department of Corrections as there are no contracts or cooperative agreements in place or identified at this time therefore, this fiscal note is being submitted as a zero. Future general fund program receipt authority will be requested as contracts or cooperative agreements are entered into and industries, products, and services are identified and implemented.



THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Corrections

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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March 20, 2017

The Honorable Dean Westlake
Alaska State House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 24
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Westlake -

I am writing today to express my enthusiastic support for HB 171: Employment of Prisoners. The efforts to increase employment opportunities for Alaska's incarcerated population are needed now more than ever during these challenging fiscal times. Currently, inmates are sitting idle far too often. Inmate idleness exacerbates the potential for mental health issues, and further puts Correctional Officers and Institutional staff at increased risk for incident. Restitution payments are low, and often they aren't made at all, hindering the ability for crime victims to be made whole. Inmates re-entering society are less likely to recidivate if they've had access to rehabilitation, education, and training within our institutions. Providing greater latitude for the Department of Corrections to create programs for inmates to obtain real-life work experience increases these opportunities.

HB 171 will assist Alaska's Criminal Justice System in the goal of controlling prison growth and ensuring that we are achieving the best public safety return on our state dollars. Offering inmates opportunities to gain real-life work experience while incarcerated can increase restitution payments, increase safety inside of facilities, reduce recidivism, and thus increase public safety as former inmates reenter into our communities. Right now it is so important to think outside of the box in finding ways to increase public safety in Alaska. Additionally, prison industries in other states have a well-established history of public/private partnerships that advances the private business community. I stand by HB 171 and urge favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dean Williams".

Dean Williams

Commissioner, Department of Corrections

April 4, 2017

Dear Representative Westlake:

I am writing today to express my support for HB 171: Employment of Prisoners. Enhancement of prisoner employment will provide more opportunities to find savings within the correctional system and, importantly, provide meaningful and productive work experiences for Alaska inmates.

Correctional employment programs are used throughout the country and provide a better quality of life during incarceration for those employed and better chances for successful reentry after incarceration. Implementing a similar program will allow inmates in Alaska the opportunity to gain work experience and learn new skills.

The Trust is actively working with a number of partners to develop solutions to address the growth of our state's criminal justice system and reduce recidivism. We believe this bill will help the state work towards those goals.

Thank you for your leadership in addressing this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jeff Jessee
Legislative Liaison