

Alaska State Legislature

House of Representatives

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House Approves Expanding DNA Database **All Felons, Sexual Offenders Must Submit Samples**

(JUNEAU) – The Alaska House of Representatives approved House Bill 49 by a vote of 34 to one on Tuesday. Sponsored by Rep. Tom Anderson (R-Anchorage) and Rep. Mike Hawker (R-Anchorage), House Bill 49 requires all convicted felons and sexual offenders, including those in custody, to submit DNA samples to the Alaska State Database. Juveniles adjudicated and in custody on the same offenses must also submit samples to the database. DNA samples are unique to one in every 2,111,000,000,000,000,000 people.

“It’s time we take full advantage of modern science to make Alaska a safer place,” Anderson said.

HB 49 will assist the Department of Public Safety with many unsolved cases. DNA testing has been required since 1996; however, the law only required samples from people found guilty of committing felonies against others. HB 49 requires DNA samples from all people who were convicted on felony or sexual offense charges before 1996 and are still in custody or on parole.

“DNA can help us solve and prevent crimes,” Anderson said. “It will direct the authorities to convicted felons and sexual offenders who committed crimes that would have gone unsolved. By using DNA to quickly catch a perpetrator, law enforcement can prevent future crimes and avoid wrongly suspecting an innocent person.”

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HB 49 also has broad support from a variety of law enforcement and victims' support groups.

"Forensic DNA typing has had a broad, positive impact on the criminal justice system," Chief Thomas Clemons, President of the Alaska Chiefs of Police Association said. "HB 49 will help to make police investigation more efficient and more accurate to help both law enforcement and crime victims."

"The broadening of the DNA database is not only a positive suspect identification tool for Alaskan law enforcement, but also a proven means of helping to solve 'cold' cases, where the leads had all but dried up," Leo J. Brandlen, State President of the Alaska Peace Officers Association said. "We believe that this proposed legislation will be of benefit to both the citizens and law enforcement of Alaska."

"Alaskan law enforcement efforts should be supported with the best technology possible," Lauree Hugonin, Executive Director of the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault said. "Requiring those convicted of crimes to register their DNA will not prevent sexual assault, but it will better equip the criminal justice system, and demonstrate Alaska's commitment to use every means available to apprehend and convict sex offenders."

HB 49 moves to the Senate.

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