



Representative Nancy Dahlstrom
Representative Lesil McGuire

Representative Ralph Samuels
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GOVERNOR SIGNS VICTIMS' RIGHTS PACKAGE **INTO LAW**

Lawmakers Provide Needed Protections For Victims

(JUNEAU) – Today, Governor Frank Murkowski signed into law all five bills in a victims' rights package put forth by Representatives Nancy Dahlstrom, (R-Anchorage/Eagle River), Lesil McGuire (R-Anchorage), Ralph Samuels (R-Anchorage), and Bill Stoltze (R-Chugiak/Mat-Su).

The victim's rights package will help those who enforce criminal laws – our police, prosecutors and judges – to reshape our justice system, re-focusing the emphasis on victims and their rights. Pieces of legislation making up the crime package, HB 348, HB 349, HB 357, HB 397 and HB 398, were introduced and passed by both the House and Senate this Session.

“No one plans to become a crime victim. Yet when crime strikes, victims are immediately drawn into an unfamiliar and confusing criminal justice system,” Representative Ralph Samuels said. “The four of us are extremely pleased that these bills have been signed into law.”

Representative Nancy Dahlstrom added, “Every year we spend millions of state dollars on attorneys to represent criminals. Today we are honored to give victims the necessary tools to protect their own constitutional rights.”

In an effort to deal with young victims involved in the system, HB 397 was introduced. According to Representative Lesil McGuire, “All parents want to make the best decisions for their children and this law will help parents guide their children through the legal process with all the information they are entitled to.”

All four sponsors are proud of the impact these five laws should have on our criminal justice system. “Victims should have rights, just as criminals do,” said Representative Bill Stoltze. “These laws will help balance the scales and provide a more level playing field so that victims are more a part of the justice system.”

Bills signed into law today are:

[HB 348](#) requires police and prosecutors to tell victims of crime about the Office of Victims' Rights, which the legislature created in 2002. The legislation recognizes that victims are often not aware of OVR's existence until after their case has gone through too much of the justice system to be helpful.

[HB 349](#) changes Alaska Court Rule 412 to permit prosecutors to cross-examine defendants using prior suppressed statements and evidence. The bill required a two-thirds vote to pass.

[HB 357](#) makes restitution mandatory in all cases that a victim has suffered financial loss. The new law allows a payment schedule to be made, but mandates that the payment be made in full.

[HB 397](#) closes a loophole by requiring that defense attorneys or defense investigators obtain permission from the parents of minors that they want to question, whether the interview is tape-recorded or not.

[HB 398](#) enables municipalities and cities throughout Alaska to create a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team if they so choose. Domestic violence is among the most preventable types of homicide, and the creation of such review teams may help stop such needless deaths.

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