

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Key Victims' Rights Legislation Passes House Unanimously

(JUNEAU) – The Alaska House of Representatives unanimously approved three pieces of crime legislation today. [HB 348](#), [HB 397](#) and [HB 398](#) are part of a crime package introduced by Representative Nancy Dahlstrom (R-Eagle River/Anchorage), Representative Lesil McGuire (R-Anchorage), Representative Ralph Samuels (R-Anchorage), and Representative Bill Stoltze (R-Chugiak/Mat-Su).

HB 348, sponsored by Representative Stoltze is a bill relating to the rights of crime victims. It would require police and prosecutors to tell victims of crime about the Alaska 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 the justice system.

Representative Stoltze said, "This legislation mandates that crime victims be notified of the resources available to them through the Office of Victims' Rights. It is time victims be given the same amount of attention as crime suspects. It is a proactive step which is strongly supported by my colleagues as evident by the unanimous vote today."

HB 397, sponsored by Representative McGuire, would close a loophole in the current law which requires that defense attorneys or defense investigators obtain consent from the parents of minors that they want to question, whether the interview is tape-recorded or not. Currently, parental consent is only required for interviews that are recorded.

Representative McGuire said of her bill, "When a minor falls victim to a sexual crime, or witnesses one, it is a traumatic and life-altering event. A minor's parents ought to be part of helping them get through the legal process that follows their victimization." She went on to say, "Without this change in the law, we leave juvenile victims vulnerable, and parents in the dark."

Also passing the House was HB 398. The bill, sponsored by Representative Dahlstrom, will allow municipalities throughout Alaska to create Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams. It would allow local governments to analyze and review the facts surrounding domestic abuse fatalities, with the hope that the information collected might aid in policy making and thus help combat domestic violence.

“The death of a victim after an appeal to the court for help and protection is unacceptable. These cases happen, and this legislation is intended to provide thorough review and recommend ways to protect future victims. We want to prevent these senseless deaths,” said Representative Dahlstrom.

These bills will now move to the Senate. The other two pieces of crime legislation, [HB 349](#) & [HB 357](#), are expected to come before the House in the next week.

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