

# 2018 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Please return by Friday, August 31 to:

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- 1. What elements of Alaska's criminal justice reforms passed from 2016 to present do you support?**

Response: Elements of Alaska's criminal justice reforms that I support include reduced bail for non-violent crimes, prompt hearings for prisoners eligible for parole and investment in substance abuse treatment programs and community based reentry services.

- 1. What elements of Alaska's criminal justice reforms passed from 2016 to present do you believe should be amended further?**

Response: I believe that we need to have an ongoing conversation about Alaskans' concerns that we're creating a system that is a revolving door, where repeat offenders have no incentive not to keep committing crimes. The legislature was attempting to address this with the changes made in SB54 and I think it's important to let Alaskans know that we will continue to look at this and won't turn a blind eye to their concerns. More importantly, I believe that we need to make sure we're adequately funding substance abuse treatment and reentry programs to help create better opportunities for people who have gotten caught up in the criminal justice system.

- 1. Would you vote to keep the following elements of Alaska's justice reforms?**

- **Tougher penalties on violent crimes like 1st and 2nd degree murder**

Yes or No? Explain: No. We are already too punitive a society and research indicates that while longer sentences do have some deterrent effect, they are concentrated in the first few

years and not an effective method for deterring violent crimes like 1st and 2nd degree murder.

- **Improved services for victims of violent crimes**

Yes or No? Explain: Yes. I believe that improved services for victims, such as expanded notifications to victims when a parolee is discharged from parole, and allowing all victims to request that the prosecutor confer with the victim concerning proposed plea agreements make sense.

- **Strengthened community supervision of those on probation and parole**

Yes or No? Explain: Yes. I believe that examining what's working and what's not with community supervision programs, and making changes in accordance with our findings, will help to reduce the number of repeat offenders and give Alaskans faith that our system is working in a way that increases public safety and helps offenders get their lives back on track.

- **Expanded crime-reduction programs like violence prevention and substance abuse treatment**

Yes or No? Explain: Yes. If we want to decrease crime rates and the number of people whose lives are derailed by getting caught up in the system, it's absolutely necessary to address the root causes of crime with programs like violence prevention and substance abuse treatment.

- **Expanded eligibility for parole to those with a record of good behavior who present minimal risk to the community**

Yes or No? Explain: Yes. Our community is better served when people are out of jail and able to continue working and supporting their families, while getting help getting back on the right track.

- **Establishment of an oversight committee and mandatory data collection and reporting requirements to ensure the law is working as intended**

Yes or No? Explain: Yes. Our criminal justice reforms were motivated by evidence based research that indicated we could reduce criminal activity, the amount of money we spend incarcerating people, and negative impacts to families and communities. Proper oversight that tracks these reforms and makes recommendations for improvement are essential to ensuring that we get the outcomes we are after and that Alaskans have faith in the system.

- **Limited jail time for people convicted of misdemeanors**

Yes or No? Explain: Yes. Sentencing that disrupts people's lives and relationships by keeping people convicted of low level offenses in jail for long periods of time is not good for offenders or our communities.

- **Making drug possession a misdemeanor offense, while maintaining felony penalties for drug dealing and distribution**

Yes or No? Explain: Yes. The success of Portugal in reducing overdoses, HIV infection rates and the rates of drug-related crime make it clear that their approach of decriminalizing drug possession, in conjunction with increased substance abuse treatment programs, is one of the most important things we can do to help people get out of the cycle of addiction and become productive members of society.

- **Placing non-violent, low-risk defendants awaiting trial under community supervision instead of prison**

Yes or No? Explain: Yes. When we incarcerate low risk defendants for non-violent crime, we eliminate their ability to work and take care of their families. Many times they lose their jobs, their families, their apartments, pets and vehicles. When they are released they have nothing, This type of pressure increases the risk of re-offending. We need to break the cycle of incarceration and that starts with not putting people in jail when that's not an appropriate course of action.

1. **Under Alaska state law, inmates are required to be returned to the place of arrest, but this is rarely communicated to them and those from rural areas are often released from prison in urban areas without the means to return to their communities. This contributes to homelessness in urban areas as well as statewide recidivism. Do you support funding to ensure that parolees are returned to their place of arrest at the time of their release?**

Response: Yes. This is a good observation and recommendation.

1. **In 2015, President Obama removed the box requiring disclosure of prior criminal conviction from federal job employment applications. Do you support or oppose similar measures on the state level to increase employment opportunities for citizens who have paid their debt to society and want to lead productive lives?**

Response: I need additional information on this. On the one hand I support giving people that have paid their debt a chance and feel our system is setup to continue punishing them. On the other hand, if I am hiring an accountant and that person was convicted of embezzling from her previous employer, that may be a reasonable thing for me to know. I would like to see research, best practices and impacts from President Obama's actions before taking a position.



