



2018 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Please return by Friday, August 31 to:

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For more information, call 907-263-2015

Candidate Name: Dennis Harris
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1. What elements of Alaska's criminal justice reforms passed from 2016 to present do you support?

Response:

Reduced recidivism, reduced racial bias, and reduced incarceration of people because they can't afford bail.

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

Response:

I think we need more on the ground people to make recommendations. Like police officers themselves and corrections officers, not just the leadership. Also, I think there should be more rural community representation. But we haven't had enough time to fully analyze the effects.

3. 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: Tough on crime laws lead to mass incarceration. Though for violent crime I am more open to supporting tougher penalties. But ultimately, we need to focus on the social determinants of crime. We need to work towards a rehabilitation focused criminal justice system.

- **Improved services for victims of violent crimes**
Yes or No? Explain: We need to support victims, it is already hard to come forward and they risk a lot by doing so. Making it easier for them to speak up and function after both the event and coming forward, should be a high priority.
- **Strengthened community supervision of those on probation and parole**
Yes or No? Explain: It is a cost effective way to decrease re-offenses, which should be a top priority of the system as a whole.
- **Expanded crime-reduction programs like violence prevention and substance abuse treatment**
Yes or No? Explain: Prevention is a better priority than punishment after the fact. And we should look at substance abuse as an illness as well, not just a crime.
- **Expanded eligibility for parole to those with a record of good behavior who present minimal risk to the community**
Yes or No? Explain: If the point is rehabilitation, then keeping people locked up to fill a timeline isn't necessarily accomplishing the goal.
- **Establishment of an oversight committee and mandatory data collection and reporting requirements to ensure the law is working as intended**
Yes or No? Explain: We should always analyze laws. Even the best intentions with years of research before something is enacted, should still require research and best intentions after a law is enacted.
- **Limited jail time for people convicted of misdemeanors**
Yes or No? Explain: In principle yes, but we should go issue by issue, and not use wide reaching terms like "misdemeanor" or "felony"
- **Making drug possession a misdemeanor offense, while maintaining felony penalties for drug dealing and distribution**
Yes or No? Explain: Yes, but we also need to remember that we have the highest unemployment in the nation. And we need to address that we are ranked the worst state to do business in, and to really tackle drug dealing and distribution, we need to look at the fact that people are struggling with little options.
- **Placing non-violent, low-risk defendants awaiting trial under community supervision instead of prison**
Yes or No? Explain: They may not have even done anything wrong. To put someone in jail for something minor, when they may not have done anything risks their economic stability.

- 4. 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 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

- 5. 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: Support, and felons should be able to vote if they paid their debt to society.