



# House Speaker Bryce Edgmon's *Legislative Update*



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## Revisions to Criminal Justice Reform Pass House; SB 54 Now Awaits Senate Concurrence

Following two weeks of debate, public testimony, and consideration of amendments in the Judiciary Committee, the Finance Committee, and on the House Floor, SB 54 passed the House in the wee hours of Tuesday morning.

The bill is now back with the Senate, which will be coming together this week to evaluate the House changes and decide whether to accept them. If they do not vote for “concurrence” with the changes, a conference committee of three members of the House and three from the Senate will be appointed to work out compromises. I’ll do my best to keep you all up to speed on what transpires.



Speaker Edgmon conferring with, center, Rep. Andy Josephson (D-Anchorage) and, right, House Majority Leader Chris Tuck (D-Anchorage) during last Friday’s floor session.

More than 45 amendments to the bill were debated on the House Floor on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Ten of them were adopted.

SB 54 was introduced earlier this year by Sen. John Coghill (R-Fairbanks) to address sentencing guidelines in the criminal justice reform effort that was initiated with passage of SB 91 in 2016. With the spike in crime in recent years—due in large part to Alaska’s drug abuse epidemic—the public is now calling for stronger punishments for certain criminal activity.

As passed by the House, SB 54 now

- Increases jail time for Class C felonies and Class A & B misdemeanor theft
- Increases sentencing and monitoring of sex offenders
- Lowers the threshold of what constitutes felony theft from \$1000 to \$750
- Strengthens punishments for violations of conditions of release from prison.

As a whole, the bill is a strong, serious response to the concerns for community safety that many Alaskans brought to the Legislature.

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My determination to improve safety and security in our communities does not end with SB 54. The whole criminal justice reform effort that began with SB 91 is focused on lowering crime and enhancing public safety. We will be evaluating all these crime-reduction efforts in the coming months and years to measure their effectiveness and monitor for any unintended consequences.

With SB 54 now in the Senate's hands, the House Finance Committee has turned to our state's revenue crisis and Governor Walker's bill, HB 4001, that would establish a broad-based wage tax to close the fiscal gap.

We in the House are hoping that the remainder of the special session will result in an agreement with the Senate to protect PFDs and the Permanent Fund, bring investments and jobs back to Alaska, and lead to long-term stability and prosperity for the state.

## Keep in Contact

### Rep. Bryce Edgmon

Address:

Capitol Building, Room 208

Juneau, AK

99801

Phone: 907-465-4451

Toll Free: 1-800-898-4451

Fax: 907-465-3445

Email:

[Rep.Bryce.Edgmon@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Bryce.Edgmon@akleg.gov)

[Adam.Berg@akleg.gov](mailto:Adam.Berg@akleg.gov)

[Tim.Clark@akleg.gov](mailto:Tim.Clark@akleg.gov)

[Amory.Lelake@akleg.gov](mailto:Amory.Lelake@akleg.gov)

[Tyra.Smith-MacKinnon@akleg.gov](mailto:Tyra.Smith-MacKinnon@akleg.gov)

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