

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Lawmakers Pass Anti-Gang Legislation

(JUNEAU) – Lawmakers took a major step towards combating gangs and the senseless gun violence that comes with them by passing the witness detention bill today (SB 3005).

Sen. Con Bunde (R – Anchorage) and Rep. Lesil McGuire (R – Anchorage) led the effort to secure passage of the bill in the house and senate.

The witness detention bill grants police and prosecutors greater leeway in dealing with witnesses who refuse to cooperate in felony criminal cases. The legislation permits a peace officer to temporarily detain and photograph an individual who witnessed a serious crime, like homicide or manslaughter, but refuses to cooperate with the investigation.

Any witness that refuses to testify or appear before a grand jury will also face tougher penalties under SB 3005.

“Gang violence is on the rise, threatening the safety of our communities. This bill is a strong first step toward solving the epidemic. With citizenry comes not just rights, but responsibilities. With this bill, we are asking people to step forward and give information that will help us save lives,” said Rep. McGuire.

“The rash of deadly shootings in Anchorage has to be stopped. This bill gives law enforcement a new tool to investigate and prosecute violent crime without violating civil liberties,” said Sen. Bunde.

Mayor Mark Begich and the Anchorage Police Department endorse the witness detention bill because it will help their efforts to halt gang violence in Anchorage.

SB 3005 passed the house today and goes back to the senate for concurrence with house amendments before it is signed into law.

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