



## SENATOR FRED DYSON

### SPONSOR STATEMENT

#### ***SB 47— “An Act increasing the penalty for failure to report child abuse or neglect.”***

IN AS 47.17, the Legislature created a reporting system intended to protect children from harm through physical injury or neglect, mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment. Certain professionals must, upon reasonable cause that abuse or neglect has occurred, contact trained investigative and/or social service personnel. These professionals need only to suspect abuse has occurred; it is not their duty to conduct subsequent investigations and/or prosecutions; they must only make the report.

Under SB 47, the penalties for failure to report will be increased from a Class B misdemeanor to a Class A misdemeanor. This increases the maximum fines from \$2,000 to \$10,000 and increases the maximum imprisonment from 90 days to one year. To raise the penalties for “non-reporting” signifies the Legislature’s emphasis on the importance to motivate childcare professionals to protect Alaska’s children in order to stop further abuse, to get help for the victims, and to deter other children from being victimized.

Consider sexual abuse of a minor. There has been published an abundance of research documenting the harm that statutory rape causes in the lives of its victims. Alaska statute reflects this research, and prohibits sexual contact with a minor, regardless of consent.

There is significant evidence that statutory rape is under-reported in Alaska. In addition, national statistics indicate that over 70% of sexually active girls age 12-14 are being exploited by adult males and that these men have numerous victims. These predators must be stopped, and Alaska’s young women must be protected. The Executive branch has also initiated similar efforts to ensure that statutory rape is consistently reported, and this bill attempts to reinforce those efforts.