



Alaska State Legislature

Senate Majority Web: www.akrepublicans.org

Sponsor: Senator Con Bunde
Current Version: CSSB 206 (FIN)
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Fact Sheet for: Senate Bill 206

Short Title: DETENTION OF MATERIAL WITNESSES

Summary:

- Increases the penalty for contempt of court for failure to honor a subpoena or refusal to answer as a witness in connection with a felony crime or appearance before the grand jury.
- Adds a section to AS 12.50 allowing a peace officer to temporarily detain a person under circumstances that give the officer reasonable suspicion that:
 - the person witnessed a crime or was in the vicinity of a crime such as homicide or manslaughter;
 - the person may have information of material aid in the investigation of that crime, and;
 - the temporary detention is reasonably necessary to obtain or verify the identification of the person, to obtain an account of the crime, to protect a crime victim from imminent harm, or for other exigent circumstances.
- Allows a police officer who has detained a person under these circumstances to:
 - photograph the person;
 - serve a subpoena on the person to appear before the grand jury if the person fails to provide valid government-issued identification;
 - take the person's fingerprints if the person is detained in connection with the investigation of a murder, attempted murder or misconduct involving weapons in the first degree under AS 11.61.190.
- Prohibits the peace officer from requiring the person to sign a subpoena issued under this section, and requires the peace officer to advise the person that failure to honor the subpoena is punishable as criminal contempt of court.
- Allows a person receiving a subpoena to request the district attorney to withdraw the subpoena if the person provides a valid government-issued photographic identification prior to the grand jury proceeding.
- Makes it a class B misdemeanor to refuse or resist the taking of photos or fingerprints, and outlines procedures for retaining or destroying them.

Benefits:

- Balances the need to protect individual freedom with the ability to prosecute crime and to provide defendants with witnesses on their behalf.

Background:

- A material witness is crucial to either the defense or prosecution. Unfortunately, material witnesses often refuse to cooperate with law enforcement officials, significantly impeding the ability to bring indictments or prosecute crime. SB 206 protects material witnesses from unreasonable arrests or confinement and helps ensure the availability of crucial testimony.