

**A brief history of therapeutic courts in Alaska**  
**from Rep. Norman Rokeberg**

**2001:**

- The House Judiciary Committee became familiar with therapeutic courts, specifically Judge Wanamaker's Anchorage Wellness Court, which he started in 1999. The Anchorage Wellness Court only handled misdemeanant DUI cases prosecuted by the Municipality of Anchorage.
- Speaker Porter introduced a therapeutic court bill, HB 172, which created a three-year, pilot felony DUI court in Anchorage & Bethel.
- Juneau Wellness Court begins.

**2002:**

- HB 4, sponsored by Rep. Rokeberg, was passed. HB 4 included therapeutic court provisions for misdemeanant DUI offenders.

**2003 -2004:**

- Therapeutic court funding expanded.
- Worked with the Administration to increase their involvement in the courts.
- Pilot felony DUI courts were extended until June 30, 2006 (HB 451).

**2005:**

- HB 4 (2002) provided \$100,000 for a Drunk Driver Pilot Program within the Department of Corrections. As this program was never implemented, this money was permanently given to the Department of Law and Department of Administration for a part-time district attorney and public defender to work on state misdemeanor DUI therapeutic cases.
- HB 132 was passed. The legislation expands the statutory therapeutic court provisions (from HB 4) to felony DUI defendants and allows the court to wave up to 75% of the fines.
- Unfortunately, HB 132 created a disparity between those felony DUI participants in the statutory therapeutic court vs. those felony participants in the pilot DUI courts regarding the disposition of their sentence and fines upon successful completion of the therapeutic court...thus creating an apparent equal protection problem.
- Multiple therapeutic courts begin around the state from Ketchikan to Fairbanks.

**2006:**

- As we have both statutory therapeutic courts and a pilot program in uncodified law conflicting with each other, we have introduced HB 441 to create one uniform statutory structure for therapeutic courts around the state. The court system has been very helpful in trying to find the best solution for the operation of these courts around the state. This structure will work for both misdemeanor and felony DUI defendants.