

ANDVSA Candidate Survey

The survey form did not allow me to enter more than one line of text in each response field. To ensure I could provide complete answers, I have included my responses to all questions below.

Name

Andrew Gray

Office/District Representation You Are Seeking:

Alaska House of Representatives, District 20

Do you view domestic violence and sexual assault as an area of primary concern?

Primary concern

Are you familiar with local programs that provide domestic violence and sexual assault services to victims across Alaska?

Yes

How often do you interact with the domestic violence/sexual assault shelter or victim services program in your area?

Frequently.

Question 1: What is your vision for Alaska when it comes to reducing sexual assault and domestic violence? What steps are you prepared to take to get there?

Alaska's rates of domestic violence and sexual assault are unacceptable. My vision is an Alaska where victims are protected, offenders are held accountable, and people can feel safe in their homes and communities.

As Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, I have made addressing these crimes a priority. I introduced House Bill 101 to raise Alaska's age of consent from 16 to 18 and strengthen protections against sexual exploitation. That legislation passed the House with unanimous bipartisan support and became law as part of the omnibus crime bill.

I believe we need stronger enforcement of our laws, the certainty of consequences for offenders, and better support for victims. We should be working toward a state where more of these crimes are reported, investigated, prosecuted, and result in convictions when the evidence supports them. We must also ensure that victims have safe places to go and the resources they need to rebuild their lives.

Question 2: What responsibilities do you believe the Legislature and other elected officials hold in advancing efforts to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault?

The Legislature has a responsibility to ensure our laws protect victims, give law enforcement the tools necessary to investigate crimes, and hold offenders accountable.

As Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, I take that responsibility seriously. We need to regularly review our criminal statutes, identify gaps that allow offenders to escape accountability, and ensure that our justice system is working for victims.

Prevention is also essential. We should support education, early intervention, and victim services, but those efforts must be accompanied by a criminal justice system that takes domestic violence and sexual assault seriously.

What efforts have you made at the local, state, and federal level to address domestic violence and sexual assault?

My most significant legislative achievement has been raising Alaska's age of consent from 16 to 18 which helps protect minors from sexual exploitation.

This legislation was developed in response to concerns about gaps in Alaska's laws that make it difficult to prosecute adults who sexually exploit 16- and 17-year-olds. The bill passed the House unanimously and went into law as part of the omnibus crime bill..

As Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, I have also had the opportunity to work with legislators, law enforcement, and victim advocacy organizations on issues involving public safety and the criminal justice system.

I remain committed to strengthening Alaska's laws and improving accountability for crimes involving domestic violence and sexual assault.

Question 3: Would you be willing to increase the current level of funding for victims' services?

Yes

I am willing to support increased funding when it directly improves access to emergency shelter, victim advocacy, and other essential services. Victims should not be left without a safe place to go because services are unavailable in their community.

Question 4: Would you be willing to increase the current level of funding for domestic violence/sexual assault prevention work?

Yes

I would consider increased funding for prevention efforts that demonstrate results. Preventing abuse before it occurs is important, particularly when programs help identify warning signs, protect children, and interrupt patterns of violence.

Question 5: Would you be willing to increase the current level of funding for legal services for victims?

Yes

Victims need access to legal assistance, particularly when seeking protective orders, navigating custody matters, or protecting themselves from continued abuse. I would support examining funding needs to ensure victims can access these essential services.

Question 6: Currently, the domestic violence response is largely a criminal justice response. Do you have ideas for other types of responses? What are they?

The criminal justice system must remain a central part of our response to domestic violence. When someone commits a violent crime, there must be consequences.

However, we also need to address the circumstances that prevent victims from leaving abusive situations. That includes access to emergency housing, transportation, education, counseling, legal assistance, and financial stability.

In many Alaska communities, especially rural communities, victims have very few options for finding safety. We need to make sure those services are available while continuing to hold offenders accountable. Victims should not have to choose between remaining in an abusive home and becoming homeless.

Question 7: Do you think the penalties for sexual violence crimes in Alaska are too harsh, too soft, or just right? What are your reasons?

Too soft but getting better. The problem isn't the severity of the punishment but the lack of certainty of consequences. Too often folks are not charged and they escape with zero consequences. This sends a message to others that they too can commit sexual crimes and get away with it.

I believe Alaska needs to take a harder approach to sexual violence, particularly crimes involving children, repeat offenders, and predatory behavior.

The passage of HB 101 reflects that position. I believe our laws have allowed some adults to exploit vulnerable teenagers without facing appropriate criminal consequences.

We need to examine sentencing laws, repeat-offender provisions, and gaps in prosecution to ensure that serious sexual offenses carry meaningful consequences. Strong laws are only effective when offenders are investigated, prosecuted, and held accountable.

Question 8: Do you think the penalties for domestic violence crimes in Alaska are too harsh, too soft, or just right? What are your reasons?

I believe Alaska's penalties for domestic violence are too soft, particularly for repeat offenders. But even more so than sexual violence, too often domestic violence goes

unprosecuted. Too many perpetrators get away with domestic violence over and over and over again. Research shows that domestic violence is often a pattern of repeated abuse, and that prior violence is an important warning sign for future violence. When offenders are not held accountable, victims remain at risk of further abuse, serious injury, and even murder.

I support stronger penalties for repeat offenders, stricter enforcement of protective orders, and meaningful consequences for individuals who repeatedly commit violent acts. We also need to ensure that law enforcement and prosecutors have the resources necessary to investigate and prosecute these crimes.

Victims need to know that when they come forward, the justice system will take their safety seriously. Our priority must be stopping the cycle of violence before another victim is seriously injured or killed.

Question 9: Would you support funding through the Department of Corrections for batterers intervention programming (BIPs)? Is this the responsibility of government? Why or why not?

Yes. I believe the Department of Corrections has a responsibility to address behavior that contributes to repeat offenses. Holding someone accountable for domestic violence should include meaningful criminal consequences, but we should also work to prevent that individual from harming someone again.

I would support evidence-based intervention programs that demonstrate they can reduce repeat offenses. These programs should not replace criminal penalties or become a way for offenders to avoid accountability.

Our priority must always be protecting victims and preventing future violence.

What would be your ideas for providing services to people who choose to cause harm to their partners?

I support requiring appropriate offenders to participate in intervention programs that address abusive behavior, coercive control, substance abuse when relevant, and personal accountability. In order to avoid a fiscal note, the offender should be responsible for paying for the program.

These programs should include clear expectations, monitoring, and consequences for failing to participate. We should also evaluate whether they are reducing repeat offenses.

The responsibility for ending abuse belongs to the person committing it. Our justice system should reinforce that responsibility.

Question 10: Do you believe abortion access should be legally protected for survivors of rape or incest?

Yes. Abortion access should be legal.

Question 11: Alaska is experiencing a housing shortage statewide. This is impacting domestic and sexual violence survivors' ability to move forward with their lives. What would be your ideas to address this?

Housing is one of the most important factors in helping victims escape abusive situations. Too often, people remain in dangerous homes because they have nowhere else to go.

I have consistently supported increasing Alaska's housing supply and reducing barriers to affordable housing development. My HB 13 which went into law this year provides municipalities with multiple ways to incentivize more affordable housing of better quality. I believe we need more housing options for all Alaskans, including victims who need to leave unsafe living situations.

We should also ensure that emergency shelters and transitional housing programs have the resources to help victims find immediate safety and move toward permanent housing. Nobody should have to remain with an abuser because they cannot afford to leave.

Question 12: Children are particularly vulnerable and may be traumatized by living with an abusive person and witnessing violence against a parent or caretaker. What remedies might you suggest to protect these children?

Children who witness domestic violence are victims of that violence, even when they are not physically assaulted. We need to do more to protect them from continued exposure to abuse.

Research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) shows that children who experience abuse or witness violence in their homes are at greater risk of developmental delays, difficulty concentrating, behavioral problems, and falling behind academically. Prolonged exposure to violence and toxic stress can interfere with healthy brain development, learning, and emotional regulation. These experiences can have lifelong consequences if we fail to intervene early.

We cannot expect children to succeed in school when they are living in fear at home. Protecting children from domestic violence is not only a public safety responsibility; it is also an investment in their education, health, and future.

That starts with holding offenders accountable, enforcing protective orders, and ensuring children and their non-abusive parents have access to safe housing. We should also support trauma-informed counseling, school-based services, and better coordination between law enforcement, child protection agencies, educators, and victim advocates.

Question 13: Would you support a bill to extend the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA)?

Yes. Alaska needs a coordinated statewide response to domestic violence and sexual assault, and the Council plays an important role in supporting that work.

I would support extending the Council while also using the sunset review process to evaluate its effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and ensure resources are reaching the communities and victims who need them.

We should expect accountability and measurable results from every state program, particularly those responsible for protecting vulnerable Alaskans.

Question 14: Please explain any solutions you would propose to support victims and hold offenders accountable for their actions.

I believe Alaska needs to take a stronger approach to domestic violence and sexual assault. We should have a criminal justice system that takes these crimes seriously, investigates them thoroughly, prosecutes offenders effectively, and imposes meaningful consequences.

As Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, I have worked to strengthen our criminal laws, including passing HB 101 to better protect minors from sexual exploitation.

Moving forward, I support examining stronger penalties for repeat offenders, improving enforcement of protective orders, and ensuring law enforcement and prosecutors have the resources necessary to pursue these cases.

At the same time, victims need access to emergency shelter, legal assistance, counseling, and safe housing. These services are particularly important in rural Alaska, where victims may have few options for escaping abuse.

We need to do both: protect and support victims while holding offenders accountable. Alaska's rates of domestic violence and sexual assault are unacceptable, and I am committed to continuing this work.