

Kenai Peninsula Borough

Legal Department

MEMORANDUM

TO: Brent Johnson, Assembly President
Members, Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

THRU: Sean Kelley, Borough Attorney *SK*

FROM: Todd Sherwood, Deputy Borough Attorney *TS*

DATE: January 18, 2022

RE: Investigative Grand Juries in Alaska and Citizen-Initiated Grand Juries in Other States - Resolution 2022-004 (Bjorkman, Elam)

You asked us to provide information in response to two questions:

1. Has the investigative and recommendation power of Alaska grand juries been used in the past?

Yes. The "Alaska Grand Jury Handbook – Alaska Court System – May 2019" lists at least 24 different times the process has been used by grand juries throughout the state (or territory) from the mid-1950s to the early 1990s. The information is not presented as an exhaustive list, but it does appear that there has been little use of the process since the early 1990s.

Alaska investigative grand juries have looked into everything from complex crimes and patterns of crime to alleged misconduct in local and state government to jails and traffic safety. Most of the examples given in the 2019 Grand Jury Handbook appeared in an Alaska Judicial Council report in February 1987 entitled: "The Investigative Grand Jury in Alaska".

Probably the most remarkable example of an investigative grand jury in Alaska is one that sat in Juneau for several months in 1985 to investigate matters involving a lease of state offices that then Governor William Sheffield had been involved in. The grand jury report became the impetus for impeachment proceedings against the governor who ultimately was not removed from office. [Alaskans and impeachment: The case of Gov. Bill Sheffield \(adn.com\)](#) ; [Alaska's governor may face impeachment for lease award - CSMonitor.com](#)