

1 SENATE BILL NO. 224

2 INTRODUCED BY C. WOLKEN

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4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT CREATING A COMMISSION ON SENTENCING TO STUDY
5 SENTENCING PRACTICES AND POLICIES; PROVIDING FOR THE SUBMISSION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
6 TO THE LEGISLATURE BY THE COMMISSION; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND
7 A TERMINATION DATE."

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9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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11 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Commission on sentencing.** (1) There is a commission on sentencing.
12 The commission is allocated to the department of corrections for administrative purposes only, as provided in
13 2-15-121.

14 (2) The commission consists of:

15 (a) two members of the house of representatives, selected by the speaker of the house of
16 representatives, no more than one of whom may be from the same political party;

17 (b) two members of the senate, selected by the president of the senate, no more than one of whom may
18 be from the same political party;

19 (c) two district court judges selected by the chief justice of the Montana supreme court;

20 (d) the director of the department of corrections or the director's designee; and

21 (e) the following individuals appointed by the governor:

22 (i) a county attorney;

23 (ii) a criminal defense attorney;

24 (iii) a probation and parole officer;

25 (iv) a county sheriff;

26 (v) a chief of police;

27 (vi) a member of the board of pardons and parole;

28 (vii) an employee of the department of justice;

29 (viii) an employee of the office of state public defender; and

30 (ix) seven members of the public, including:

- 1 (A) a representative of crime victims;
2 (B) a representative of faith-based organizations that assist in reentry or corrections programming;
3 (C) a representative of community businesses;
4 (D) a representative of an organization that provides mental health services;
5 (E) a representative of an organization that advocates on behalf of indigent people;
6 (F) a formerly incarcerated person or family member of a current or former inmate; and
7 (G) an enrolled member of a state-recognized or federally recognized Indian tribe located within the
8 boundaries of the state of Montana.

- 9 (3) Appointments under subsection (2) must be made within 60 days after [the effective date of this act].
10 (4) The commission shall select a presiding officer from its members.
11 (5) The commission shall meet at least quarterly.

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13 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Duties.** The commission shall:

14 (1) conduct an empirical study of the impact of existing sentencing policies and practices on Montana's
15 criminal justice system, including state prison capacities, local jail and detention center capacities, community
16 supervision and parole resources, judicial operations, public defense expenditures, and law enforcement
17 responsibilities;

18 (2) identify strategies to safely reduce incarceration in state prisons and to promote evidence-based
19 diversion programs and other effective alternatives to incarceration;

20 (3) investigate the factors contributing to recidivism, evidence-based recidivism reduction initiatives, and
21 cost-effective crime prevention programs;

22 (4) consider issues regarding disparity in the criminal justice process, including but not limited to racial
23 and ethnic disparity issues;

24 (5) identify opportunities to:

25 (a) streamline and simplify the criminal code; and

26 (b) balance sentencing practices and policies with budget constraints;

27 (6) prepare a report of findings and recommendations for submission to the 65th legislature, including
28 evidence-based analysis and data; and

29 (7) make a recommendation to the 65th legislature as to whether the commission should continue in
30 existence.

