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TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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Sentencing Reform Bill Signed by Governor Polis

Senate Bill 21-271, a comprehensive overhaul of Colorado's sentencing laws, has been signed by Governor Polis.

This bill was the result of a bipartisan, collaborative effort to reform the sentencing laws for the State of Colorado. With overwhelming and bipartisan support, this bill is a major step forward in sentencing reform. This bill, which is more than 370 pages in length, will produce significant and wide-ranging changes to sentencing in Colorado. SB 271 adjusts the sentencing ranges for misdemeanors, eliminates redundant offenses, and reclassifies misdemeanor and felony offenses.

There has not been a comprehensive review of sentencing laws in Colorado since 1985. Over the ensuing decades, Colorado's sentencing statutes have become outdated, misaligned, and inconsistent. Also, there is a lack of certainty that exists regarding the amount of time a person will actually serve when sentenced. This uncertainty is unfair to victims, the accused, and the community. For that reason, SB 271 also requires all county jails to utilize a standard, consistent measure for determining time served and thereby eliminate the inconsistencies that vary by jurisdiction.

Governor Polis directed that the Sentencing Reform Task Force undertake a comprehensive review of sentencing laws to ensure that our sentencing structure is rational, just, equitable, consistent, and reflective of our shared values. The Sentencing Reform Task Force reviewed over 1,000 criminal offenses covering Title 1 through Title 44 and conducted a state-by-state review of sentencing ranges. The work of the Sentencing Reform Task Force will continue over the summer months. District Attorney Michael Dougherty serves as the Co-Chair for Colorado's Sentencing Reform Task Force.