



Gov. Rick Snyder signs law creating Justice Policy Commission to review criminal sentencing guidelines

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LANSING — Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder on Monday signed laws **creating the Justice Policy Commission, designed to reform criminal sentencing,** and enacting minor reforms to the community corrections system.

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder.

AP File.Photo

House Bills **5928** and **5929** are now Public

Acts 465 and 466. Public Act 465 creates

the Justice Policy Commission and P.A. 466 encompasses the reforms to the community corrections system.

The Justice Policy Commission is a reboot of the Michigan Sentencing Guidelines Commission, which operated from 1998 to 2002. The Justice Policy Commission will be tasked with reviewing state and local sentencing and release policies for felonies, along with how misdemeanors affect local jails. The commission would also review the effectiveness of sentencing guidelines.

The legislation states the Justice Policy Commission must make recommendations to the Legislature regarding how to: make criminal sentences proportionate to the severity of crimes, rehabilitate offenders, not make sentences more severe than necessary, preserve judicial discretion, make uniform sentences and eliminate inequities in sentencing, among other reforms.

The commission would be made up of two members of the Michigan Senate Judiciary Committee, two members of the Michigan House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, the Michigan Attorney General, a circuit court judge, a district court judge, a prosecutor, a criminal defense attorney, an advocate of alternative incarceration, a mental health expert, a sheriff, a representative from the Michigan Department of Corrections, an advocate of alternative incarceration, a mental health expert, a representative of the Michigan Association of Counties and a community corrections representative.

The laws amend the community corrections act to require evidence-based practices; require five years for probation on major felonies and two years probation for lesser felonies and require high school equivalency certification programs to be provided in all prisons.

A statement from Snyder's office said, "the bills aim to improve local alternatives to prison for eligible non-violent offender and create court consistency across the state."

The new laws are half of a package of four bills that were introduced by former Rep. Joe Haveman (R-Holland). **They passed the Michigan House of Representatives 105-4** and House Bill 5928 passed the Michigan Senate unanimously. House Bill 5929 passed the Michigan Senate 37-1, with one abstention.

The other parts of the package introduced by Haveman also included reforms to the probation and parole processes. Those bills **were gutted in the process of passing the Michigan House of Representatives** and were shot down in the Michigan Senate during the final hours of Michigan's 2013-14 legislative session.

Haveman had hoped the full package of bills would help shrink Michigan's \$2 billion corrections budget.

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