

As a career prosecutor who has spent the last 37 years fighting to keep communities throughout Arizona safe, I will be voting NO on this Act. Here is why.

As a young prosecutor, I handled many serious felonies. Victims of crime were usually relieved, even joyful, to hear the judge pronounce sentence against their offender. But then, I would have to explain to them the reality. At that time, most defendants only had to serve half of the sentence imposed by the judge. Time and again, I would watch the victims' emotions turn to disbelief, anguish, anger, and finally bitterness for a system where a 5-year prison sentence really only meant 2.5 years.

In 1990, Arizona passed our Crime Victims Bill of Rights and, in 1993, passed Truth-in-Sentencing laws. Since then, our system ensures that a convicted criminal serve at least 85% of the sentence. Truth-in-Sentencing gives judges a range of prison terms that can be imposed for different types of crime, based on the severity of the crime itself. It eliminates disparity in sentencing across the state.

This Act destroys the truth in sentencing in Arizona. It will completely dismantle our sentencing code. It will, once again, allow many very serious and repeat offenders to serve only half of their sentence before being released back on our streets and into our communities. This Act also unravels years of work in Arizona to eliminate bias and discrimination in how judges sentence criminal offenders. It will give judges virtually unlimited discretion to ignore the sentencing laws for many very serious crimes. It will take us back to the days when who you are, where you live, and who your sentencing judge is will determine your sentence.

Please join me in voting no on this terrible law.

Sheila Polk, Yavapai County Attorney, Prescott

This Act is reckless. It will put you and your family at significant risk. It will mean more victims. Alternatives for non-violent, first time offenders are developing. But this criminal justice reform is dangerous.

This poorly drafted law will allow criminals, including repeat offenders, who have committed very serious, even violent crimes, to be given unsupervised probation.

Consider the impact of putting these criminals back into your neighborhood with no rehabilitation or supervision, criminals convicted of:

Manslaughter

Terrorism

Domestic violence aggravated assault by strangulation

Sex trafficking

Aggravated robbery

Aggravated assault on a Peace Officer or Fire Fighter

Assaults that cause substantial disfigurement, or while the victim is bound, or after entering the private home of another

Most forms of kidnapping

Extortion

Unlawful use of infectious biological substance or radiological agent

Defrauding an elderly couple out of their life savings

Bribery.

And imagine this horror. Unsupervised probation for committing these crimes against children age 15, 16, or 17:

Sexual abuse

Sexual exploitation of a minor

Taking a child for prostitution

Child sex trafficking

Continuous sexual abuse of a child

Unlawful mutilation.

This must be defeated. Please do not make victims out of innocent children by allowing this to become law.

The goal of equal justice is to treat similarly situated defendants across the state in a similar way.

This principle was enshrined in our law by a bi-partisan Legislature and a Democratic Governor.

We know from the history of the 60's and 70's what this radical proposal will bring. It will return us to skyrocketing crime and wildly disproportionate sentences. We will see the same travesties that motivated Arizona, many years ago, to pass our sentencing laws and limit unrestrained discretionary leniency for the most serious and repeat offenders.

Please vote NO.

Steve Twist, Scottsdale

This proposal has a misleading name. It will further neither public safety nor rehabilitation. What it will do is destroy the integrity of criminal justice in Arizona, and make us a state where serious and repetitive crimes routinely go unpunished and criminal sentences pronounced by courts have no meaning. Its result will be more crime, more kids drawn toward crime, and more distrust between government and the citizens it serves.

The Truth In Sentencing law enacted 27 years ago has served Arizona well ever since. It was and remains a rare example of government increasing its integrity and transparency. Attempts to undermine it have failed in the legislative process because they cannot withstand analysis and argument. So this initiative is now held out as a rehabilitation tool, but it will deliver no such benefit. What it will deliver is pain, in the form of more victimization and more criminality. The Truth In Sentencing law was enacted with 89 of 90 votes in the Arizona legislature and broadly imitated around America. It did not and has not across the decades increased incarceration. On the contrary, it has allowed the state to utilize limited prison capacity for incapacitation and deterrence of the most dangerous and repetitive offenders through measured, consistent punishment of criminal conduct. There is no significant incidence of excessive sentencing in the Arizona criminal justice system. ARS 13-603.L, also enacted decades ago, empowers any sentencing judge who believes a mandatory sentence to be excessive to authorize a petition for immediate review by the board of clemency. That statute is almost never used.

Maintain the integrity of our criminal courts and vote no on this measure. It will not further rehabilitation, but it will surely lead to more crime and more broken lives.

Jay Heiler, James J Heiler, Paradise Valley

Prop XXX is a California style jail-break approach to criminal justice reform. Liberal organizations killed efforts to pass reasonable earned release credit legislation as well as legislation to require the government convict someone of a crime prior to forfeiting their property. This was a political stunt to help their radical proposition. Prop XXX is a threat to public safety and a push to let violent offenders on the street. Vote NO on Prop XXX.

Scot Mussi, President, Arizona Free Enterprise Club, Gilbert