

# Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences

**Date:** 1/9/2026

**Location:** Afton Room, DOC, 1450 Energy Park Drive, St. Paul, MN 55108 and via Webex

Members attending in-person (2): Nate Reitz, John Donovan

Members attending online (9): Shane Baker, Kenneth Sass, Nick Sassor, Jeremiah Carlson, Mark Osler, Dale Harris, Amber Johnson, Ashley Sturz-Griffith, and Robert Stewart

Members absent (2): Morgan Kunz, Kelly Mitchell

Also present: Melissa Serafin, Julie Atella, Sophak Mom, and Jennifer McCleary, Julia Laskorunsky

## 1. Welcome (All members)

- Nate Reitz (Task Force Chair) called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

## 2. Roll call (Don Klick)

## 3. Approval of December 2025 minutes and today's agenda

- Agenda and Meeting Minutes from 12/12/2025 were approved by unanimous consent.
- Decision to continue with two hour meetings (instead of three).

## 4. Overview of draft report template (Wilder Research)

- Julie Atella from Wilder Research provided an overview of the draft outline of the report.
- No feedback was provided.

## 5. Prioritizing taskforce's work over the next few months (Wilder Research, all)

- Reviewed the data tables sent ahead of time provided by the MSGC that breaks down mandatory minimum sentencing outcomes by demographics (e.g., sex, race), district, criminal history, offense

type and other characteristics. Provides counts and percentages of cases that involved mitigated dispositional and durational departures.

- Note that assault offenses comprised majority of cases.
- Note that dispositional departures are generally more common for cases involving lower criminal history scores, which may imply needed nuance provided by sentencing guidelines vs. mandatory minimums. Note that it would be helpful to know more about these cases (e.g., geography/district).
- Note that 25% of high-amount first-degree controlled substance offenses with mitigated dispositional departures involved prosecutor objections. Would be interested in learning more about these cases (e.g., jurisdiction), including whether the prosecutor appealed. Note that occasionally, there are plea agreements where prosecutors decide not to appeal. These are small numbers but may be reflected in the data.
- Note that these data pertain to initial sentencing, so it does not reflect changes based on appeals, probation violations, etc. Additionally, these data only pertain to the most serious crime each individual has been convicted of within one month.
- Note that more than a quarter of cases with departures for possession of a firearm/ammunition by someone convicted of a crime of violence list chemical dependency treatment as the reason for departure. Would be interesting to understand this reasoning more and case compositions generally. Note that chemical dependency programming is sometimes used to demonstrate a defendant is amenable to probation.
- Note that the data also do not identify the specific crime of violence committed.
- Note that data does not reflect how some individuals have multiple open court cases and pleas in one case may affect others. There is a black box regarding how plea bargains interact with mandatory minimums.
- Note that some offense categories are very broad, and the relevant mandatory minimum may be more or less appropriate depending on the specific situation.
- Note that mitigated dispositional departures are more common for cases where ammunition was the cause of violation vs. cases where a firearm was the cause of violation.
- Wilder provided an overview of survey responses so far. Most commonly, respondents indicated interest in weapons possession violations and registration and violations. Fewer respondents indicated interest in weapons possession among violent offenders and drug felonies.
- Survey respondents indicated interest in charging decisions and plea negotiations. Note that any changes to the sentencing guidelines or mandatory minimums would mean changes to charging practices.
- Ashley provided an overview of the framework she developed that describes 8 factors to consider (e.g., public safety impact, fairness and proportionality, equity and disparities). Interest in exploring how financial impacts interact with public safety and the equity and disparities aspects given the disparities in the data reviewed previously.
- Concern expressed regarding focusing too much on the report before understanding the content, and concern about the time it has taken to identify the focus of the task force.
- Unanimous decision to include 609.11 offenses.
- Note that recommendations regarding weapons charges may be challenging given recent firearm violence.

- Question regarding whether recommendations for sentencing guidelines (not mandatory minimums) are out of scope for the task force.
- Motion to include predatory offender registration mandatory minimums within the scope of the Task Force by John Donovan. Motion was seconded by Dale Harris. Motion was approved by unanimous consent.
- Controlled substance offenses have declined since drug sentencing reforms, which may be an argument to exclude them.
- Most other categories have small numbers of cases, which may be a reason to exclude them.
- Motion to include controlled substance mandatory minimums (i.e., Chapter 152 offenses) within the scope of the Task Force by Jeremiah Carlson. Motion was seconded by Mark Osler. Jeremiah Carlson, John Donovan, Amber Johnson, Mark Osler, Nick Sassor, Robert Stewart, and Ashley Sturz-Griffith voted aye, while Shane Baker, Dale Harris, Nate Reitz, and Kenneth Sass voted nay. Motion passes.
- Discussion regarding whether to create new or reorganize subcommittees and the need to define the specific questions the task force is trying to answer.
- Rob provided an overview of potential research questions/analyses. Note that there are many possible options and the task force cannot feasibly address them all. Wilder will review questions and align with the framework developed by Ashley and consider how they could be delegated across subcommittees.
- Appreciation expressed for the two hour meeting length (shortened from three hours).

## **6. Subcommittee breakouts (All members)**

- Decision to forgo subcommittee breakouts.

## **7. Revisit timeline and work plan (Wilder Research, all)**

- The task force is making progress and on track to meet the project deadline.

## **8. Update about vacancies (Don Klick)**

- House of Representatives appointee role still vacant and unlikely to be filled.

## **9. Public comment**

No public comment.

## **10. Adjournment**

Nate Reitz adjourned the meeting at 11:59 am.

# 11. Next Meeting

**Date:** 02/13/2026  
**Time:** 10:00 am - 12:00 pm  
**Location:** Afton Room, DOC, 1450 Energy Park Drive, St. Paul, MN 55108 and via Webex