

Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences

Date: 10/10/2024

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

Members attending in-person (4): John Donovan, Morgan Kunz, Kelly Mitchell, Mark Osler.

Members attending online (5): Amber Johnson, Nate Reitz, Ken Sass, Rob Stewart, Ashely Sturz-Griffith.

Members absent (2): Shane Baker, Jeremiah Carlson.

Also present: Julie Atella (Wilder Foundation), Don Klick (DOC), Julie Laskorunsky (UMN), Kevin Reitz (UMN), Melissa Serafin (Wilder Foundation), Sophie Mom (Wilder Foundation).

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Nate Reitz (Task Force Chair) called the meeting to order at 9:01 am.

2. Approval of Draft Agenda and Draft Meeting Minutes from 9/26/2025 (ACTION)

Agenda and Meeting Minutes from 9/26/2025 were approved by unanimous consent.

3. Subcommittee Vision (Discussion)

- Data Subcommittee
 - Chair: Dr. Robert Stewart
 - Focus: Identify the areas in which deeper dives would provide additional information for the broader task force.
- Legal Analysis & Purpose
 - Chair: Prof. Mark Osler
 - Focus: Historical analysis of mandatory minimums and comparative state reforms.
- Stakeholder Input
 - Chair: DOC Asst. Commissioner Kelly Mitchell
 - Plan to solicit an organization to conduct interviews with affected individuals.
 - Draft and review solicitation
 - Identify who would be targeted and what information is being looked for, and what questions will be asked.
 - Subcommittee would present the findings
- Task Force Scope
 - The sense is to focus the task force on the more commonly used mandatory sentences. Those are 609.11 offenses (ineligible people possessing firearms and the others within this

statute), failure to register as a predatory offender, and drugs, which represent the majority of mandatory minimum cases.

- Suggestion to include a broader review of the philosophy and purpose of mandatory minimums.
- Discussion on whether to include life sentences; consensus leaned toward excluding them due to their unique nature.

4. History of MN Statute §609.11 (Discussion) – Nate Reitz

- Traced legislative changes identifying key milestones from 1963 to present ([see presentation](#)).
- Discussed terminology which defines and is related to mandatory minimum sentences.
- Raised questions about rationality, consistency, and purpose mandatory minimum sentences.
 - Purpose and effectiveness of mandatory minimums.
 - Impact of prior records.
 - Disparities in application.
 - Alternatives to current structures.

5. Overview of Mandatory Minimums (Discussion) – Mark Osler

- Historical context: From colonial punishments to modern sentencing.
- Six justifications for mandatory minimums:
 - Deterrence
 - Crime prevention
 - Retribution
 - Uniformity
 - Truth in sentencing
 - Addressing judicial disparities
- Critiques of mandatory minimums:
 - Lack of effectiveness.
 - Undermining judicial discretion.
 - Upside-down sentencing outcomes.

6. Other Business (Discussion)

- Vacancies Update. The task force still has three vacancies: Representative from Statewide Civil Rights Organization (Speaker of the House appointment), Retired District Court Judge (MN Chief Justice Appointment), and Peace Officer Familiar with Shooting Investigations (MN Chiefs of Police Association Appointment). Staff are reaching out weekly for appointments.
- Request by chair to post the meeting recordings online. Staff will work to get these recordings posted on the DOC YouTube channel.
- Poll for sub-committee involvement to be sent out.

7. Public Comment

No Public Comment

8. Adjournment

Nate Reitz adjourned the meeting at 10:46 am.

9. Next Meeting

Date: 11/14/2025

Time: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

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