

Law eliminating life-without-parole drug sentences goes into effect

LANSING — A Macomb County man sentenced to life in prison without parole because of a 2000 drug offense could get a reprieve with a new law that went into effect last week.

The bill eliminates the requirement that habitual drug offenders get enhanced sentences, up to life in prison without parole. Instead, prisoners would be eligible for parole after serving five years of their sentence.

That could help John Sellors, a Macomb County man convicted in 2002 of selling 51 grams of cocaine. It was his second drug offense and required the enhanced sentence. Several requests for commutation from Sellors have been denied, according to a House analysis of the bill.

He is one of three prisoners in Michigan prisons who will be eligible for parole as a result of the new law, said Corrections' Department spokeswoman Holly Kramer.

Michigan reformed its drug sentencing laws in 1998, getting rid of some of the toughest sentencing practices in the nation. But the enhanced sentencing for second drug offenses stayed on the books.

The three-bill package passed unanimously in both the House of Representatives and Senate and were the last bills signed into law last year. They went into effect on March 28.

They were among more than 100 bills signed by Gov. Rick Snyder and Lt. Gov. Brian Calley in the final six weeks of 2017. Others included packages of bills that require municipalities to report and develop plans to deal with unfunded liabilities in pension and retiree health care funds.

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Contact us for a free no-obligation case evaluation at 800-656-3557.

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Most of those bills went into effect in the first quarter of 2018 while a handful will go into effect later this year.

Other bills that were signed into law:

PA 168 (SB 415): Require retail gas stations to have safety measures to guard against credit card skimmers. Sponsor: Sen. Wayne Schmidt, R-Traverse City.

PA 169 (SB 107): Modify the inspection procedures for housing units and require landlords to notify tenants on when inspections are going to occur. Sponsor: Sen. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge.

PA 170 (SB 120): Revise the maximum length guidelines for truck trailer transporters. Sponsor: Sen. Tom Casperson, R-Escanaba.

PA 171 (SB 238): Allow lending institutions to pay referral fees of up to \$500 to refer potential borrowers to the institution. Sponsor: Sen. Darwin Booher, R-Evart.

PA 172 (SB 286) : Require the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs to administer training for certified nurse aides. Sponsor: Sen. Hoon-Yung Hopgood, D-Taylor.

PA 173 (SB 278): Allow Michigan to join the Interstate Library Compact so that the state can enter into agreements for all services provided by libraries in bordering states. Sponsor: Sen. John Proos, R-St. Joseph.

PA 174 (SB 381): Allow warrants on charges of failing to appear in court to be served by first class mail or e-mail. Sponsor: Sen. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge.

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PA 175 (SB 520): Create a fee for subscription services for the secured transactions that are filed with the Michigan Department of State. Sponsor: Sen. Darwin Booher, R-Ewart.

PA 176-188 (SB 553-557 and 562-565) Update the laws and references to the Michigan History Center in existing statute. Sponsors: Sens. Wayne Schmidt, R-Traverse City and Mike Green, R-Mayville.

PA 189 (HB 4285): Specify that a person is not liable for unpaid property taxes unless the person owned the property when the tax was due. Sponsor: Rep. Peter Lucido, R-Shelby Township.

PA 190 (SB 509): Designate a portion of M-52 in Ingham County as the Deputy Grant Whitaker Memorial Highway. The Ingham County sheriff's deputy was killed in 2017 when his vehicle crashed during a pursuit of a suspect. Sponsor: Sen. Curtis Hertel, D-East Lansing.

PA 191 (HB 4065): Allow individuals with prior felony convictions to pursue a job with the Michigan Department of Corrections. Sponsor: Dave Pagel, R-Berrien Springs.

PA 192 (HB 4208): Amend election law to ensure that a member of the House of Representatives or Senate who resigns or is removed from office can seek election to finish that term of office. Sponsor: Rep. Aaron Miller, R-Sturgis.

PA 193 (HB 4716): Allows for the termination of parental rights for a parent who knowingly performs female genital mutilation on a child or transports the child for the procedure. Sponsor: Rep. Peter Lucido, R-Shelby Township.

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PA 194-195 (HB 4355 and SB 275): Prohibit law enforcement officers from having sex with prostitutes while they're conducting undercover investigations. Sponsors: Rep. Gary Glenn, R-Williams Township, Sen. Judy Emmons, R-Sheridan.

PA 196 (SB 342): Modify the language requirements that need to be included in a deed to transfer a parcel of land. Sponsor: Sen. John Proos, R-St. Joseph.

PA 197 (SB 385): Remove the regulations that restrict collection agencies from hiring attorneys and sharing office space. Sponsor: Sen. Jim Stamas, R-Midland.

PA 198 (SB 524): Require fingerprinting and background checks for all applicants to law enforcement academies. Sponsor: Sen. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge.

PA 199 (SB 552): Extend the current fee structure for off road vehicle licenses and trail permit fees. Sponsor: Sen. Goeff Hansen, R-Hart.

PA 200 (HB 4802): Create a process for couples who asked probate judges to keep their marriage licenses private to have those licenses unsealed. Sponsor: Rep. Triston Cole, R-Mancelona.

PA 201 (HB 4320): Provide a supplemental budget appropriation of \$23.2 million to deal with water contaminated with PFAS or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. Sponsor: Rep. Laura Cox, R-Livonia.

PA 202-214 (SB 686, 688 and 691-699 and HB 5301, 5304, 5306, 5308, 5310 and 5313): Address unfunded health care and pension liabilities in local governments by requiring more frequent and detailed reporting to the state of retiree benefit plans in cities, townships, villages and counties. Sponsors: Sens. Jim Stamas, R-Midland, Dave Hildenbrand, R-Lowell, Phil Pavlov, R-St. Clair, Mike Shirkey, R-Clarklake and Reps. Gary Glenn, R-Williams Township, Kathy Crawford, R-Novi, Eric Leutheuser, R-

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Hillsdale, Gary Howell, R-North Branch, James Lower, R-Cedar Lake, Rob VerHeulen, R-Walker.

PA 215 (HB 4976): Create a framework for alternative dispute resolution that taxpayers or the Department of Treasury may initiate to avoid more costly litigation. Sponsor: Rep. Jim Tedder, R-Clarkston.

PA 216 (HB 4502): Exempt self-insured workers' compensation groups from the Corporate Income Tax. Sponsor: Rep. James Lower, R-Cedar Lake.

PA 217 (HB 4420): Allow for the extension of the completion date for brownfield development projects that are getting tax credits. Sponsor: Rep. Jim Tedder, R-Clarkston.

PA 218-221 (HB 5165, 5173 and SB 566-567): Provide use and sales tax exemptions for the sale of dental prosthetics. Sponsors: Reps. Bronna Kahle, R-Adrian, Julie Alexander, R-Hanover and Sen. Dale Zorn, R-Ida.

PA 222-223 (SB 631 and 673): Modify the configuration of a nonprofit dental care corporation's board of directors and billing and payment requirements. Sponsors: Sens. Mike Shirkey, R-Clarklake and Joe Hune, R-Gregory.

PA 224 (SB 649): Allow the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to begin three pilot programs to integrate physical and behavioral health services. Sponsor: Sen. Mike Shirkey, R-Clarklake.

PA 225-232 (HB 5165-5172): Change the way the Unemployment Insurance Agency flags and treats suspected cases of fraud to ensure there is no repeat of a scandal in which thousands of unemployment benefit recipients were wrongly accused of getting benefits fraudulently. Sponsors: Reps. Joe Graves, R-Linden, Kevin Hertel,

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D-St. Clair Shores, Wendell Byrd, D-Detroit, Diana Farrington, R-Utica, Beau LaFave, R-Iron Mountain, Joe Bellino, R-Monroe, Martin Howrylak, R-Troy.

PA 233 (HB 4054): Allow school buses to be equipped with additional flashing signs. Sponsor: Rep. Holly Huges, R-White River Township.

PA 234 (HB 4907): Allow commercial vehicles to purchase fundraising license plates. Sponsor: Rep. Roger Victory, R-Hudsonville.

PA 235 (SB 630): Change the minor in possession first offense from a misdemeanor to a civil infraction. Sponsor: Sen. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge.

PA 236 (SB 478): Lower the number of unpaid parking tickets from six to three that a driver can accrue before having their driver's license held when they go to renew it. Sponsor: Sen. David Hildenbrand. R-Lowell.

PA 237 (SB 480): Designate a portion of I-96 as the Mitchel A. Kiefer Foundation for Distracted Driver Awareness Highway. Kiefer was killed in a car accident caused by a distracted driver in 2016. Sponsor: Sen. Mike Kowall, R-White Lake.

PA 238 (SB 575): Delay the implementation date for fee increases on motorcycle endorsements and registration fees until Feb. 19, 2019. Sponsor: Sen. Tom Casperson, R-Escanaba.

PA 239 (HB 4207): Expand the definition property eligible for community revitalization incentives to include grocery stores. Sponsor: Rep. Andy Schor, D-Lansing.

PA 240 (HB 4807): Codify Michigan State Police oversight of rates, fares, charges and tariffs on carriers of water between states. Sponsor: Rep. Dan Lauwers, R-Brockway.

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PA 241 (SB 44): Add several crimes to the list from which a court may order a defendant to reimburse law enforcement costs. Sponsor: Sen. Goeff Hansen, R-Hart.

PA 242 (SB 375): Expand the list of energy projects eligible for special financing. Sponsor: Sen. Darwin Booher, R-Evart.

PA 243-245 (SB 483, 485-486): Amend the rules associated with employing junior hockey players. Sponsor: Sens. Ken Horn, R-Frankenmuth, Jim Stamas, R-Midland, Jim Ananich, R-Flint.

PA 248-255 (SB 47, 166-167, 270, 273-274 and HB 4403, 4406-4408): Require prescribers to check a patient's prescription history before providing controlled substances to the patient. Sponsors: Sens. Tonya Schuitmaker, R-Lawton, Steve Bieda, D-Warren, Rick Jones, R-Grad Ledge, Marty Knollenberg, R-Troy, Dale Zorn, R-Ida and Reps. Joseph Bellino, R-Monroe, Andy Schor, D-Lansing, Beth Griffin, R-Paw Paw.

PA 256-259 (SB 180-183): Update licensing provisions for child care facilities to meet new federal standards. Sponsors: Sens. Tonya Schuitmaker, R-Lawton, Dave Hildenbrand, R-Lowell, Hoon-Yung Hopgood, D-Taylor.

PA 260 (HB 5126): Clarify that restraint and seclusion policies in public schools do not apply to law enforcement. Sponsor: Rep. Daniela Garcia, R-Holland.

PA 261-264 (SB 570-573): Provide deadline flexibility for companies applying for and receiving personal property tax exemptions. Sponsors: Sens. Dave Hildenbrand, R-Lowell, Jack Brandenburg, R-Harrison Township, Dave Robertson, R-Grand Blanc, John Proos, R-St. Joseph.

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PA 265-267 (SB 72-73 and 220): Update parole eligibility requirements related to habitual drug offenses by eliminating outdated life-without-parole sentences for non-violent offenses. Sponsor: Sen. Steve Bieda, D-Warren.

For more information, go to www.legislature.mi.gov.

Contact Kathleen Gray: kgray99@freepress.com or on Twitter @michpoligal

P.S.

Thank You Kathleen for Just the Facts...

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