

## Study of sentencing laws on Legislature's list

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**CHEYENNE n With Wyoming ranking No. 8 nationally in the number of people in prison, the time is ripe for a study of sentencing laws, the Joint Judiciary Committee members concluded.**

The study, which was approved by the legislative management council, is the No. 3 priority for the Joint Judiciary Interim Committee.

The committee request noted that recent legislative proposals that established increased minimum mandatory sentences and increased maximum sentences placed increased pressure on the corrections system.

It also said that several recent studies and the experience in Colorado and other states suggest that ever-increasing rates of incarceration and the costs do not result in diminishing returns on the crime rates.

In contrast, states that have restructured their systems to reduce sentencing have not experienced an increase in the crime level, and in some cases the crime rate has gone down.

Bob Lampert, director of the Department of Corrections, suggested the committee look at sentencing laws, Sen. Tony Ross, R-Cheyenne, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said Monday.

**"The object would be to look and see where are we going, what is our policy, should there be more treatment than incarceration and what is effective and what isn't," Ross said.**

The committee learned when reviewing sex offender laws that the sentences were "all over the place," he added.

For example, he said. the maximum sentence for incest was 5 years in prison.

Ross is unsure if legislation will come out of the study which will take 2 years to complete.

The committee's top priority is a study of disparate treatment of juveniles entering the judicial system.

The second-ranked study is one whether the state needs to establish a procedure for people convicted of crimes to appeal their convictions based on DNA evidence after their appeal period has expired.

Wyoming is one of nine states that does not have such a procedure in place. No such cases have come up yet in the state, Ross said.

Several of the interim studies concern topics and bills that failed to pass the Legislature.

Those include examinations of how to make up the lost revenue for cities and towns and counties because of the sales tax exemption on groceries; a study of Interstate 80 problems caused by increased truck traffic and the establishment of a veterans' museum.

The legislative leaders who sit on the management council must approve the studies and assign a budget for each committee.

The leaders designated many of the topics as 2 year studies.

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