

Support Denver Sentencing Reform

Denver's criminal code is **out of step** with Denver values and state standards, risking residents' **liberty** and actively **harming vulnerable communities**.

City Council Members are *championing change*.

THE PROBLEM

Disproportionate & Unfair Punishments

1. Denver's criminal code is outdated, illegal, & coercive.

- Denver's criminal code is **out of compliance** with the CO Supreme Court's decision in *Simons & Camp*, which prohibits cities from imposing harsher sentences than state law allows for the same conduct.
- Denver's current sentencing laws allow **unpredictable and disparate punishments** that destabilize vulnerable communities.
- The threat alone of 300+ days in jail **coerces people to take guilty pleas** for lowest-level offenses and give up their right to trial to avoid the possibility of a long jail sentence.

2. Large sentencing ranges criminalize poverty & exacerbate racial disparities.

- In response to 2020 racial justice protests, Colorado's code was updated to tiered sentencing ranges and help **eliminate racial disparities**; Denver's code deserves the same update.
- Rational, limited sentencing ranges, where the sentence is tiered to level of harm reduces **racial disparities in sentencing**.
- Poverty and race are deeply tied. Denver's code allows **60 - 300 days in jail** for poverty offenses (e.g. camping), disproportionately threatening Denverites of color with lengthy incarceration for **acts of survival**.

Disparate sentences for poverty offenses:

10 DAYS
STATE COURT

VS

60-300 DAYS
DENVER MUNICIPAL COURT



THE DENVER POST

DEC. 22, 2025

Municipal courts can't issue harsher punishment than state court for same offenses, Colorado Supreme Court rules

500+
ILLEGAL JAIL SENTENCES

by Denver Municipal Court
in just 2 years.

SEPTEMBER 2023 - 2025

3. Denver's criminal code puts immigrants at increased risk of ICE intervention and deportation.

- Longer jail sentences increase opportunities for ICE's to find, detain, and disappear immigrants from Denver's jail.
- Lengthy municipal jail sentences for low level offenses increases the risk of **poverty-initiated deportation** for immigrants and can result in a loss of deportation defenses.



THE SOLUTION

Code Reform Legislation proposed by Council Members Gonzales-Gutierrez, Lewis, and Parady:

- ✓ **COMPLIES WITH LEGAL LIMITS**
Aligns penalties for offenses to comply with the recent CO Supreme Court decision.
- ✓ **REFLECTS DENVER VALUES**
Limits poverty-based, municipal-only offenses 10 days in jail, the limit for state petty offenses, preserving city resources to reduce poverty rather the criminalize it.
- ✓ **PROVIDES CONSISTENCY AND PREDICTABILITY**
Denverites deserve a clear, rational and standardized sentencing scheme that prohibits extreme and disparate sentences for poverty offenses.



TAKE ACTION bit.ly/Denver-Muni-Tools