



---

## JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Thursday, December 18, 2025  
Roughrider Room, State Capitol  
Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Janne Myrdal, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

**Members present:** Senators Janne Myrdal, Ryan Braunberger, Jose L. Castaneda, Claire Cory, Dick Dever, Diane Larson, Dean Rummel\*; Representatives Nels Christianson, Karla Rose Hanson, Lawrence R. Klemin, Ben Koppelman, Gregory Stemen\*, Bill Tveit\*

**Members absent:** Representatives TJ Brown, Liz Conmy, Steve Vetter

**Others present:** Colby Braun, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation; Dennis Ingold, Burleigh County; Jesse Jahner\*, Cass County Sheriff's office; Thaddeus L. Johnson\* and William J. Sabol\*, Georgia State University; Claire Ness, Attorney General's office; Jason Stugelmeyer, Bismarck Police Department; H. Patrick Weir, State Parole Board; Jason Ziegler, Mandan Police Department

See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

*\*Attended remotely*

**It was moved by Senator Larson, seconded by Representative Koppelman, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the August 26, 2025, meeting be approved as distributed.**

### SENTENCING, CORRECTIONS, AND PAROLE SYSTEMS STUDY

Mr. Austin Gunderson, Counsel, Legislative Council, presented a background memorandum entitled [Sentencing, Corrections, and Parole Study - Background Memorandum](#).

Ms. Claire Ness, Chief Deputy Attorney General, Attorney General's office, presented information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding truth in sentencing, incarceration requirements, and statistics on violent offenders. She noted violent crime in the state has increased each year since 2014.

Mr. Jason Ziegler, Chief of Police, Mandan Police Department, and Mr. Jason Stugelmeyer, Chief of Police, Bismarck Police Department and Vice President, North Dakota Police Chiefs Association, presented information regarding the impact of the current sentencing, correctional, and parole systems on law enforcement and public safety.

Mr. Ziegler noted:

- A criminal investigation requires significant investigative hours involving detectives, supervisors, and specialized resources.
- Repeatedly arresting the same individuals after early release or limited supervision can frustrate officers and lower department morale.

Mr. Stugelmeyer noted:

- Among the 136 officers in the Bismarck Police Department, a disproportionate amount of time and resources is devoted to repeated interactions with a small segment of the population.

- The Bismarck Police Department has increased partnerships with federal agencies to leverage federal prosecutorial resources, search warrants, and sentencing tools to more effectively address serious criminal activity.

Mr. Jesse Jahner, Sheriff, Cass County, presented information regarding the impact of current sentencing, correctional, and parole systems on public safety and regional jails. He noted insufficient accountability in probation and parole practices has resulted in repeated violations, continued victimization of residents, and increased fiscal impacts on local taxpayers.

Mr. Dennis Ingold, Senior Assistant State's Attorney, Burleigh County, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding recommendations to increase transparency in sentences served by offenders in the custody of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR). He noted the American Law Institute recommends offenders serve a minimum of 70 percent of their sentences, regardless of the crimes committed.

Dr. William J. Sabol, Professor, and Dr. Thaddeus L. Johnson, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Georgia State University, presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding an update of criminal justice issues and violent crime in the United States.

Mr. H. Patrick Weir, Chairman, State Parole Board, presented information regarding parole eligibility, release decisions, and an overview of the board. He noted:

- The State Parole Board is a six-member rotating panel that meets monthly to review applications for parole.
- Each board member reviews approximately 30 applications per meeting, including sentencing reports and attached presentence, psychiatric, and psychological documents.
- Many inmates have serious psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, which cannot be effectively treated by DOCR.

Mr. Colby Braun, Director, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, presented information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding inmate classification, housing, placement authority, transitional services, definitions and terms relating to sentencing and incarceration in a secured facility, the use of community-based services for inmates, and the need for rehabilitation and re-entry opportunities.

In response to questions from committee members, Mr. Braun noted:

- Certain transitional facilities are privately owned and operate under contracts with DOCR.
- The department monitors contract facilities through inspections and audits, similar to oversight of local jails, to ensure compliance with rules and contractual obligations.

Mr. Travis Finck, Executive Director, Commission on Legal Counsel for Indigents, presented information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding the impact of requiring offenders to serve 85 percent of their term of incarceration in a secured facility, the use of community-based services for inmates, and the need for rehabilitation and re-entry opportunities. He noted incentives, including earned sentence credits and early release opportunities, encourage participation in rehabilitative programming.

Mr. Finck presented a report containing data on the indigent defense contract system and established public defender offices.

No further business appearing, Chairman Myrdal adjourned the meeting at 4:47 p.m.

---

Austin Gunderson  
Counsel

ATTACH:6