

HOUSE BILL NO. 210  
INTRODUCED BY J. SHOCKLEY  
BY REQUEST OF THE LAW AND JUSTICE INTERIM COMMITTEE

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT AUTHORIZING AN APPEAL TO DISTRICT COURT BASED UPON THE DENIAL OF A MOTION TO WITHDRAW A PLEA OF GUILTY OR NOLO CONTENDERE BY A COURT OF LIMITED JURISDICTION; AMENDING SECTIONS 46-17-203 AND 46-17-311, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND AN APPLICABILITY DATE."

WHEREAS, the concurring opinion in State v. Boucher, 2002 MT 114, 309 Mont. 114, 48 P.3d 21 (2002), urges the Legislature to give the District Courts authority to entertain direct appeals from courts of limited jurisdiction in cases in which the defendant claims that a guilty plea was not voluntary.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

**Section 1.** Section 46-17-203, MCA, is amended to read:

**"46-17-203. Plea of guilty -- use of two-way electronic audio-video communication.** (1) Before or during trial, a plea of guilty or nolo contendere may be accepted when:

(a) subject to the provisions of subsection (3), the defendant enters a plea of guilty or nolo contendere in open court; and

(b) the court has informed the defendant of the consequences of the plea and of the maximum penalty provided by law that may be imposed upon acceptance of the plea.

(2) ~~(a) A~~ Subject to subsection (2)(b), a plea of guilty or nolo contendere in a justice's court, city court, or other court of limited jurisdiction waives the right of trial de novo in district court. A defendant must be informed of the waiver before the plea is accepted, and the justice or judge shall question the defendant to ensure that the plea and waiver are entered voluntarily.

(b) A defendant who claims that a plea of guilty or nolo contendere was not entered voluntarily may appeal the denial of a motion to withdraw the plea to district court. The district court may appoint counsel, hold a hearing, and enter appropriate findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a decision affirming or reversing the denial of the defendant's motion to withdraw the plea by the court of limited jurisdiction. The district court may remand the case, or the defendant may appeal the decision of the district court.

(3) For purposes of this section, in cases in which the defendant is charged with a misdemeanor offense, an entry of a plea of guilty or nolo contendere through the use of two-way electronic audio-video communication, allowing all of the participants to be observed and heard in the courtroom by all present, is considered to be an entry of a plea of guilty or nolo contendere in open court. Audio-video communication may be used if neither party objects and the court agrees to its use. The audio-video communication must operate as provided in 46-12-201."

**Section 2.** Section 46-17-311, MCA, is amended to read:

**"46-17-311. Appeal from justices', municipal, and city courts.** (1) Except as provided in 46-17-203(2)(b) or subsection (4) of this section and except for cases in which legal issues are preserved for appeal pursuant to 46-12-204, all cases on appeal from a justice's or city court must be tried anew in the district court and may be tried before a jury of six selected in the same manner as for other criminal cases. An appeal from a municipal court to the district court is governed by 3-6-110.

(2) The defendant may appeal to the district court by filing written notice of intention to appeal within 10 days after a judgment is rendered following trial or the denial of the motion to withdraw a plea as provided in 46-17-203(2)(b). In the case of an appeal by the prosecution, the notice must be filed within 10 days of the date that the order complained of is given. The prosecution may appeal only in the cases provided for in 46-20-103.

(3) Within 30 days of filing the notice of appeal, the court shall transfer the entire record of the court of limited jurisdiction to the district court.

(4) A defendant may appeal a justice's court or city court revocation of a suspended sentence to the district court. The district court judge shall determine whether the suspended sentence will be revoked. A jury trial is not available in a sentence revocation procedure."

NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Effective date.** [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

NEW SECTION. **Section 4. Applicability.** [This act] applies to denial of motions to withdraw pleas of guilty or nolo contendere entered on or after [the effective date of this act].

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