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SENATE BILL NO. 95
INTRODUCED BY B. USHER
BY REQUEST OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE OVERSIGHT COUNCIL

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING SENTENCING LAWS FOR THEFT, FAILURE TO RETURN RENTED OR LEASED PERSONAL PROPERTY, ISSUING A BAD CHECK, DECEPTIVE PRACTICES, AND FORGERY; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 45-2-101, 45-6-301, 45-6-309, 45-6-316, 45-6-317, AND 45-6-325, MCA."

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

Section 1. Section 45-2-101, MCA, is amended to read:

"45-2-101. General definitions. Unless otherwise specified in the statute, all words must be taken in the objective standard rather than in the subjective, and unless a different meaning plainly is required, the following definitions apply in this title:

- (1) "Acts" has its usual and ordinary meaning and includes any bodily movement, any form of communication, and when relevant, a failure or omission to take action.
- (2) "Administrative proceeding" means a proceeding the outcome of which is required to be based on a record or documentation prescribed by law or in which a law or a regulation is particularized in its application to an individual.
- (3) "Another" means a person or persons other than the offender.
- (4) (a) "Benefit" means gain or advantage or anything regarded by the beneficiary as gain or advantage, including benefit to another person or entity in whose welfare the beneficiary is interested.
(b) Benefit does not include an advantage promised generally to a group or class of voters as a consequence of public measures that a candidate engages to support or oppose.
- (5) "Bodily injury" means physical pain, illness, or an impairment of physical condition and includes mental illness or impairment.
- (6) "Child" or "children" means any individual or individuals under 18 years of age, unless a

1 (ii) The value of any other instrument that creates, releases, discharges, or otherwise affects any
2 valuable legal right, privilege, or obligation is considered the amount of economic loss that the owner of the
3 instrument might reasonably suffer by virtue of the loss of the instrument.

4 (iii) The value of electronic impulses, electronically produced data or information, computer
5 software or programs, or any other tangible or intangible item relating to a computer, computer system, or
6 computer network is considered to be the amount of economic loss that the owner of the item might reasonably
7 suffer by virtue of the loss of the item. The determination of the amount of economic loss includes but is not
8 limited to consideration of the value of the owner's right to exclusive use or disposition of the item.

9 (b) When it cannot be determined if the value of the property is more or less than \$1,500 by the
10 standards set forth in subsection (77)(a), its value is considered to be an amount less than \$1,500.

11 (c) Amounts involved in thefts committed pursuant to a common scheme or the same transaction,
12 whether from the same person or several persons, may be aggregated in determining the value of the property.

13 (78) "Vehicle" means a device for transportation by land, water, or air or by mobile equipment, with
14 provision for transport of an operator.

15 (79) "Weapon" means an instrument, article, or substance that, regardless of its primary function, is
16 readily capable of being used to produce death or serious bodily injury.

17 (80) "Witness" means a person whose testimony is desired in an official proceeding, in any
18 investigation by a grand jury, or in a criminal action, prosecution, or proceeding."

19
20 **Section 2.** Section 45-6-301, MCA, is amended to read:

21 **"45-6-301. Theft.** (1) A person commits the offense of theft when the person purposely or knowingly
22 obtains or exerts unauthorized control over property of the owner and:

23 (a) has the purpose of depriving the owner of the property;

24 (b) purposely or knowingly uses, conceals, or abandons the property in a manner that deprives the
25 owner of the property; or

26 (c) uses, conceals, or abandons the property knowing that the use, concealment, or abandonment
27 probably will deprive the owner of the property.

28 (2) A person commits the offense of theft when the person purposely or knowingly obtains by

1 threat or deception control over property of the owner and:

2 (a) has the purpose of depriving the owner of the property;

3 (b) purposely or knowingly uses, conceals, or abandons the property in a manner that deprives the
4 owner of the property; or

5 (c) uses, conceals, or abandons the property knowing that the use, concealment, or abandonment
6 probably will deprive the owner of the property.

7 (3) A person commits the offense of theft when the person purposely or knowingly obtains control
8 over stolen property knowing the property to have been stolen by another and:

9 (a) has the purpose of depriving the owner of the property;

10 (b) purposely or knowingly uses, conceals, or abandons the property in a manner that deprives the
11 owner of the property; or

12 (c) uses, conceals, or abandons the property knowing that the use, concealment, or abandonment
13 probably will deprive the owner of the property.

14 (4) A person commits the offense of theft when the person purposely or knowingly obtains or
15 exerts unauthorized control over any part of any public assistance provided under Title 52 or 53 by a state or
16 county agency, regardless of the original source of assistance, by means of:

17 (a) a knowingly false statement, representation, or impersonation; or

18 (b) a fraudulent scheme or device.

19 (5) A person commits the offense of theft when the person purposely or knowingly obtains or
20 exerts or helps another obtain or exert unauthorized control over any part of any benefits provided under Title
21 39, chapter 71, by means of:

22 (a) a knowingly false statement, representation, or impersonation; or

23 (b) deception or other fraudulent action.

24 (6)— A person commits the offense of theft when the person:

25 (a) purposely or knowingly commits insurance fraud as provided in 33-1-1202 or 33-1-1302; or

26 (b) purposely or knowingly diverts or misappropriates insurance premiums as provided in 33-17-

27 1102.

28 (7) A person commits the offense of theft of property by embezzlement when, with the purpose to

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1 deprive the owner of the property, the person:

2 (a) purposely or knowingly obtains or exerts unauthorized control over property of the person's
3 employer or over property entrusted to the person; or

4 (b) purposely or knowingly obtains by deception control over property of the person's employer or
5 over property entrusted to the person.

6 ~~(7)(8)~~—(a) Except as provided in ~~subsections (7)~~ subsection (8)(b) and (7)(d), a person convicted of
7 a first offense of the offense of theft of property not exceeding \$1,500 in value shall be fined an amount not to
8 exceed ~~\$500~~ \$1,500 or be imprisoned in the county jail for a term not to exceed 6 months, or both. A person
9 convicted of a second offense shall be fined an amount not to exceed ~~\$500~~ \$1,500 or be imprisoned in the
10 county jail for a term not to exceed 6 months, or both. A person convicted of a third or subsequent offense shall
11 be fined an amount not to exceed ~~\$500~~ \$1,500 and be imprisoned in the county jail for a term of not less than 5
12 30 days or more than ~~6 months~~ 1 year.

13 (b) (i) Except as provided in subsection ~~(8)(7)(c)~~, a person convicted of the offense of theft of
14 property that exceeds \$1,500 in value and ~~does not exceed \$5,000 in value shall be fined an amount not to~~
15 ~~exceed \$1,500 or be imprisoned in the state prison for a term not to exceed 3 years, or both. A person~~
16 ~~convicted of a second offense shall be fined an amount not to exceed \$1,500 or be imprisoned in the state~~
17 ~~prison for a term not to exceed 5 years, or both. A person convicted of a third or subsequent offense shall be~~
18 ~~imprisoned in the state prison for a term of not less than 2 years or more than 5 years and may be fined an~~
19 ~~amount not to exceed \$5,000.~~

20 (ii) ~~A person convicted of the theft of property exceeding \$5,000 in value or as part of a common~~
21 ~~scheme as defined in 45-2-101, or the theft of any amount of anhydrous ammonia for the purpose of~~
22 ~~manufacturing dangerous drugs, shall be fined an amount not to exceed \$10,000~~ \$50,000 or be imprisoned in a
23 state prison for a term not to exceed 10 years, or both.

24 (iii)(ii)—A person convicted of the theft of any commonly domesticated hoofed animal shall be fined
25 an amount of not less than \$5,000 or more than \$50,000 or be imprisoned in a state prison for a term not to
26 exceed 10 years, or both. If a prison term is deferred, the court shall order the offender to perform 416 hours of
27 community service during a 1-year period, in the offender's county of residence. In addition to the fine and
28 imprisonment, the offender's property is subject to criminal forfeiture pursuant to 45-6-328 and 45-6-329.

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68th Legislature 2023

Drafter: Julianne Burkhardt, 406-444-4025

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1 (c) A person convicted of the offense of theft of property exceeding \$10,000 in value by
2 embezzlement shall be imprisoned in a state prison for a term of not less than 1 year or more than 10 years
3 and may be fined an amount not to exceed \$50,000. The court may, in its discretion, place the person on
4 probation with the requirement that restitution be made under terms set by the court. If the terms are not met,
5 the required prison term may be ordered.

6 ~~(d) A person convicted of a first offense for the offense of theft of property not exceeding \$1,500 in~~
7 ~~value and who utilized an emergency exit in furtherance of that offense shall be fined an amount not to exceed~~
8 ~~\$500 or be imprisoned in the county jail for a term not to exceed 6 months, or both. On a second conviction, the~~
9 ~~offender shall be fined an amount not to exceed \$1,000 or be imprisoned in the county jail for a term not to~~
10 ~~exceed 1 year, or both. On a third conviction, the offender shall be fined an amount not to exceed \$5,000 and~~
11 ~~be imprisoned in the county jail for a term of not less than 5 days or more than 1 year.~~

12 ~~(8)(9)~~—Amounts involved in thefts committed pursuant to a common scheme or the same
13 transaction, whether from the same person or several persons, may be aggregated in determining the value of
14 the property.

15 ~~(9) A person convicted of the offense of theft of property not exceeding \$100 in value is presumed to~~
16 ~~qualify for a deferred imposition of sentence as long as the person has not been convicted of a misdemeanor or~~
17 ~~felony offense in the past 5 years.~~

18 (10) A person convicted of the offense of theft of property not exceeding \$100 in value is presumed
19 to qualify for a deferred imposition of sentence as long as the person has not been convicted of a misdemeanor
20 or felony offense in the past 5 years."

21

22 **Section 3.** Section 45-6-309, MCA, is amended to read:

23 **"45-6-309. Failure to return rented or leased personal property.** (1) A person commits the offense
24 of failure to return rented or leased personal property if, without notice to and permission of the lessor, the
25 person purposely and knowingly fails to return the property within 48 hours after the time provided for return in
26 the rental agreement, provided that clear written notice, in bold print, of the date and time when return of the
27 property is required and of the penalty prescribed in this section is stated in the rental or lease agreement.

28 (2) Presentation to the lessor by the lessee of identification that is false for the purpose of