

1 \*\*\*\* BILL NO. \*\*\*\*  
2 INTRODUCED BY \*\*\*\*  
3 BY REQUEST OF THE \*\*\*\*  
4

5 HJ36-1 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING COMPENSATION TO WRONGFULLY  
6 CONVICTED AND EXONERATED PEOPLE \*\*\*."

7  
8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

9  
10 NEW SECTION. Section 1. Establishing a claim for compensation. (1) As used in [this act],  
11 "claimant" means a person convicted and subsequently imprisoned for one or more crimes that person did not  
12 commit who is not currently serving a term of imprisonment, and who meets the criteria in subsection (2).

13 (2) If the claimant meets the requirements of this section, the claimant may bring a civil action against  
14 the state of Montana for wrongful conviction. The claimant prevails if they establish each of the following  
15 requirements by a preponderance of the evidence:

16 (a) the person was convicted of a felony crime in this state and subsequently imprisoned for a period of  
17 at least 6 months;

18 (b) the claimant's judgment of conviction was reversed or vacated and either the charges were  
19 dismissed or on retrial the claimant was found to be not guilty;

20 (c) the claimant did not commit the crime or crimes for which the claimant was convicted and;

21 (i) did not aid, abet or act as an accomplice in the commission of any acts; and did not attempt, solicit,  
22 or conspire to commit any acts that were the basis of the conviction; and

23 (ii) did not commit a lesser offense necessarily included in the crime for which the claimant was  
24 convicted.

25 (d) the claimant did not commit perjury under 45-7-201, MCA, fabricate evidence, or by the claimant's  
26 own conduct cause or bring about the conviction. A confession or admission that is later found to be false or a  
27 guilty plea that is withdrawn does not constitute committing perjury, fabricating evidence or causing or bringing  
28 about the conviction under this subsection and 45-7-201, MCA does not apply;

1 (e) The claimant establishes that either of the following occurred:

2 (i) The claimant's conviction was reversed or vacated and either the claimant was not retried and  
3 the charges were dismissed or the claimant was retried and was found not guilty; or

4 (ii) The claimant was pardoned by the Montana board of pardons and parole or the governor on  
5 the grounds that the claimant was innocent; and

6 (f) The claimant establishes that the basis for reversing or vacating the conviction was not legal error  
7 unrelated to factual innocence.

8 (g) All provisions of existing law relating to the absolute or qualified immunity of any judicial officer,  
9 prosecutor or law enforcement officer, including all applicable provisions of federal and state law, apply to an  
10 action brought under [this act].

11 (3) A claimant may file a petition in district court seeking damages from the state of Montana under to  
12 [this act] if they are able establish the criteria in subsection (2)(a) through (2)(g).

13 (4) A claimant is entitled to a hearing in district court as expeditiously as possible after the filing of  
14 claim.

15 (5) If a claimant dies prior to filing or during pendency of a claim under this section, the person's estate  
16 may file or maintain a claim pursuant to [this act].

17 (6) The court, in exercising its discretion regarding the weight and admissibility of evidence submitted  
18 under this section may in the interest of justice give due consideration to difficulties of proof caused by the  
19 passage of time, the death or unavailability of witnesses, the destruction of evidence or other factors not  
20 caused by claimants or those acting on their behalf.

21 (7) A claimant who meets the criteria in subsection (2), and who intends to bring an action under  
22 [section 2] shall receive a transition assistance grant of \$5,000 from the department of corrections within 30  
23 days of their release from imprisonment.

24 (a) The claimant or claimant's counsel must verify by affidavit filed with the department of corrections  
25 that the person satisfies the requirements set forth in [section 2], under penalty of perjury.

26 (b) If the claimant fails to file a claim within the time period described in [section 2], or the claim is  
27 denied by the district court, the claimant shall reimburse the state in the amount of \$5,000 within 1 year.

28

1            **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Claim in district court**

2            (1) If a claimant meets the requirements in [section 1] the claimant may file a claim for compensation  
3 against the state under [this] act in district court. **All such actions are governed by the Montana rules of civil**  
4 **procedure.** The claim must be:

5            (a) accompanied by a statement of facts explaining the basis of the claim for compensation;

6            (b) written and verified by the claimant under penalty of perjury;

7            (c) filed within a period of **three years** after:

8            (i) dismissal of the criminal charges against the claimant or finding of not guilty on retrial; or

9            (ii) the grant of a pardon to the claimant.

10           (2) A claimant convicted, imprisoned and released from custody before July 1, 2021, must commence  
11 an action under this section **no later than July 1, 2024.**

12           (3) All pleadings must be captioned, "In the matter of the wrongful conviction of [name of claimant]."

13           (4) Any claim filed pursuant to [this act] must be served on the department of justice. **The department**  
14 **must provide a defense for the state for claims under [this act].**

15           (5) A claim for compensation filed under this section **must be tried by a jury unless a jury trial is waived**  
16 **upon agreement of the parties.**

17           (6) If the court finds that the claimant is entitled to judgment, the court must enter a certificate of  
18 innocence finding that the claimant was innocent of all crimes for which the claimant was mistakenly convicted.  
19 The clerk of the court shall send a certified copy of the certificate of innocence and the judgment to the  
20 Department of Justice for payment pursuant to [this act].

21           (7) The decision of the district court may be appealed directly to the supreme court.

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23           **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Expungement.** (1) Upon entry of a certificate of innocence, the court  
24 shall order the associated convictions and arrest records expunged and purged from all applicable state and  
25 federal systems including both electronic and hard copy systems. The court must enter the expungement order  
26 regardless of whether the claimant has prior criminal convictions in other cases that are not the subject of the  
27 claim for compensation.

28           (2) The order of expungement must state:

- 1 (a) claimant's full name;
- 2 (b) claimant's full name at the time of arrest and conviction, if different than the claimant's current
- 3 name;
- 4 (c) claimant's sex, race and date of birth;
- 5 (d) crime for which the claimant was arrested and convicted;
- 6 (e) date of the claimant's arrest and date of the claimant's conviction; and
- 7 (f) identity of the arresting law enforcement authority and identity of the district court that rendered the
- 8 conviction.

9 (3) The order of expungement shall also direct the department of justice to purge the conviction and  
10 arrest information from the criminal justice information system central repository and **all applicable databases.**  
11 The clerk of the court shall send a certified copy of the order to the department, for immediate action and the  
12 department must carry out the order and notify the federal bureau of investigation, the department of  
13 corrections and any other criminal justice agency that may have a record of the conviction and arrest. The  
14 department must provide confirmation of such action to the court.

15 (4) If a certificate of innocence and an order of expungement are entered, the claimant shall be treated  
16 as not having been arrested or convicted of the crime or crimes to which the certificate of innocence applies.

17 (5) Upon entry of a certificate of innocence:

18 (a) the court must order the expungement and destruction of any associated biological samples from  
19 the claimant. The order must state the information required to be expunged and destroyed.

20 (b) The clerk of the court shall send a certified copy of the order to the department, which must carry  
21 out the order and provide confirmation of such action to the court.

22 (c) the department is no required to expunge and destroy any samples record associated with the  
23 claimant related to any offense other than the offense(s) for which the court has entered a certificate of  
24 innocence.

25 (6) The decision to grant or deny a certificate of innocence does not have a res judicata effect on any  
26 other criminal proceedings involving the claimant.

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28 **NEW SECTION. Section 4. Damages.** (1) Damages awarded under this section are:

1 (a) \$60,000 for each year of imprisonment, except as provided in subsection (3); and

2 (b) \$25,000 for each additional year served on parole or probation supervision or each additional year  
3 the claimant was required to register as a sexual or violent offender whichever is greater.

4 (2) Compensation under [this act] is immune from the monetary limitation under 2-9-108, MCA.

5 (3) A claimant is not entitled to receive compensation for any period of incarceration during which the  
6 claimant was concurrently serving a sentence for a conviction of another crime for which such claimant was  
7 lawfully convicted and incarcerated.

8 (4)(a) Except as provided in subsection (b), the court shall order that the award be paid as a  
9 combination of an initial payment not to exceed \$100,000 or 25% of the award, whichever is greater, and the  
10 remainder as an annuity not to exceed \$80,000 per year.

11 (b) (i) On July 1 of each year the award is increased by an amount equal to the consumer price index  
12 increase, if any, for urban wage earners compiled by the bureau of labor statistics of the United States  
13 department of labor or its successor agency in the preceding calendar year.

14 (ii) The amount for any partial year must be prorated in order to compensate only for the portion of such  
15 year when the claimant was incarcerated.

16 (c) The claimant shall designate a beneficiary or beneficiaries for the annuity by filing such designation  
17 with the court.

18 (d) The court may order that the award be paid in one lump sum if the court finds that it is in the best  
19 interests of the claimant.

20 (5) In addition to the damages awarded pursuant to subsection (1), a claimant:

21 (a) is entitled to receive costs, including, but not limited to, the actual cost of all expenses reasonably  
22 incurred in an action brought pursuant to this section, and reasonable attorney fees, not to exceed a total of  
23 \$25,000, unless a greater amount is authorized by the court upon a finding of good cause;

24 (b) may also be awarded other non-monetary relief as sought in the complaint including, but not limited  
25 to, counseling, housing assistance and personal financial literacy assistance, as appropriate;

26 (c) is entitled to receive tuition assistance; and

27 (d) is entitled to 1 year of state-funded medical insurance.

28 (e) all funds received by the claimant and the value of services provided, except any attorney fees

1 retained by counsel, are exempt from state income taxes.

2 (5) The department of corrections must provide all reentry services to the claimant that are provided to  
3 other persons, including, but not limited to, financial assistance, housing assistance, mentoring and counseling.  
4 Such services must be provided while an action under this section is pending and after any judgment is  
5 entered, provided the claimant prevails.

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7 **NEW SECTION. Section 5. Offset provision.** (1) If, at the time of the damages award referred to in  
8 [section 4], the claimant has won a monetary award against the state or any political subdivision in a civil action  
9 related to the same subject, or has entered into a settlement agreement with the state or any political  
10 subdivision related to the same subject, the amount of the award in the action or the amount received in the  
11 settlement agreement, less any sums paid to attorneys or for costs in litigating the other civil action or obtaining  
12 the settlement agreement, must be deducted from the sum of money to which the claimant is entitled under  
13 [this act]. The court must include in the judgment entry an award to the state of any amount deducted.

14 (2) If subsection (1) does not apply and if, after the time of the damages award referred to in [section 4],  
15 the claimant wins a monetary award against the state or any political subdivision thereof in a civil action related  
16 to the same subject, or enters into a settlement agreement with the state or any political subdivision thereof  
17 related to the same subject, the claimant shall reimburse the state for the sum of money paid under the  
18 damages award referred to in [section 4], less any sums paid to attorneys or for costs in litigating the other civil  
19 action or obtaining the settlement agreement. A reimbursement required under this subsection may not exceed  
20 the amount of the monetary award the claimant wins for damages in the other civil action or the amount  
21 received in the settlement agreement.

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24 **NEW SECTION. Section 6. Special revenue account for exoneree compensation.** (1) There is a  
25 special revenue account for exoneree compensation in the state special revenue fund provided for in 17-2-102.

26 (2) There must be deposited in the account: [source of funds here].

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28 - END -