



LAW AND JUSTICE INTERIM COMMITTEE

69th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Shane Morigeau
Vince Ricci
Barry Usher
Sue Vinton

HOUSE MEMBERS

Steven Kelly
Braxton Mitchell
Amy Regier
Zooley Zephyr

COMMITTEE STAFF

Laura Sherley - Lead Staff
Julianne Burkhardt - Legal Staff
Ania Alduenda - Secretary

MINUTES LOG

November 18 and 19, 2025

UM Campus Missoula

Missoula, Montana

Please note: This document is a Minutes Log and provides annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of the meeting and the time at which the item was presented or discussed, a motion was made, or a vote was taken. The narrative presented here is provided only as a guide to the audio or video recording of the meeting. The official discussion, motion, or vote is available on the audio or video archive of this meeting. The Legislature does not prepare a transcript of the meeting activities. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

Access to an electronic copy of these minutes and the audio or video recording is provided from the Legislative Branch home page at <https://leg.mt.gov>. From the home page, select the "Committees" drop down menu at the top, then select Administrative or Interim, and the appropriate committee. The written minutes log can be located by expanding the accordion menu for the date of the meeting. Links to the audio/video files can be located by selecting the Video/Audio button on the same page, then the "past/current recordings" button. From there, use the calendar to select the date of the meeting you wish to view/listen to. The written Minutes Log, along with links to the audio and video recordings, is listed by meeting date on the interim committee's web page. Each of the Exhibits is linked and can be viewed by clicking on the Exhibit of interest. All Exhibits are public information and may be printed. Please contact the Legislative Services Division at 406-444-3064 for more information.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Amy Regier, Presiding Officer (R)
Rep. Zooley Zephyr, Vice Presiding Officer (D)
Rep. Steven Kelly (R)
Rep. Braxton Mitchell (R)
Sen. Vince Ricci (R)
Sen. Sue Vinton (R)

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Sen. Shane Morigeau (D)
Sen. Barry Usher (R)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Laura Sherley, Lead Staff
Julianne Burkhardt, Legal Staff
Ania Alduenda, Secretary

AGENDA ([Attachment 1](#))

VISITORS' LIST ([Attachment 2](#))

The Law and Justice Interim Committee attended two tours with the Criminal Justice Oversight Council on November 18, 2025. See Attachment 1 for more information.

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL - NOVEMBER 19, 2025

08:00:05 Presiding Officer Amy Regier called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

Meeting Overview

08:00:37 Presiding Officer Amy Regier

08:01:06 Vice Presiding Officer Zoey Zephyr

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NOVEMBER 18, 2025 TOURS

08:01:52 None

AGENCY OVERSIGHT: DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (COR)

08:02:11 Presiding Officer Amy Regier

08:02:21 Brian Gootkin, Director, COR

08:07:05 Natalia Bowser, Innovation Chief, COR

Committee Discussion / Questions

08:13:31 Sen. Sue Vinton

08:13:44 Dir. Brian Gootkin, COR

08:13:50 Presiding Officer Amy Regier

08:13:56 Dir. Brian Gootkin, COR

Public Comment

08:14:28 May Simmons, Lake County Resident

08:16:47 Presiding Officer Amy Regier

08:17:11 **Recessed**

08:26:54 **Reconvened**

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 23 - YOUTH COURT LAWS

Overview of and Services Provided by the Montana Violent Crime Investigators Association (MVCIA)

08:26:59 Presiding Officer Amy Regier

08:27:34 Kelly Norton, Deputy Juvenile Probation Officer, Missoula County Youth Court

08:27:41 Meghan Benson, Managing Public Defender, Missoula Region - Office of the State Public Defender (OPD)

08:27:54 Mark Handelman, Deputy County Attorney, Missoula County Attorney's Office (MCAO)

08:28:09 Hon. Jason Marks, 4th Judicial District Court

08:28:13 Hon. Jennifer Lint, 21st Judicial District Court

08:28:17 Christine Kowalski, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, Missoula County Youth Court

[EXHIBIT 1](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

09:28:24 Presiding Officer Amy Regier
09:29:03 Hon. Jennifer Lint, 21st Judicial District Court
09:31:00 Christine Kowalski, Missoula County Youth Court
09:34:12 Vice Presiding Officer Zooey Zephyr
09:34:51 Mark Handelman, MCAO
09:35:28 Hon. Jason Marks, 4th Judicial District Court
09:36:07 Hon. Jennifer Lint, 21st Judicial District Court
09:36:28 Sen. Sue Vinton
09:37:18 Mark Handelman, MCAO
09:38:47 Meghan Benson, OPD
09:39:00 Hon. Jason Marks, 4th Judicial District Court
09:39:25 Hon. Jennifer Lint, 21st Judicial District Court
09:40:40 Sen. Vince Ricci
09:41:07 Mark Handelman, MCAO
09:42:13 Christine Kowalski, Missoula County Youth Court
09:42:42 Rep. Steven Kelly
09:43:05 Hon. Jennifer Lint, 21st Judicial District Court
09:43:39 Christine Kowalski, Missoula County Youth Court
09:43:48 Meghan Benson, OPD
09:45:06 Vice Presiding Officer Zooey Zephyr
09:45:58 Meghan Benson, OPD
09:48:16 Rep. Steven Kelly
09:48:46 Meghan Benson, OPD
09:49:41 Hon. Jennifer Lint, 21st Judicial District Court

Public Comment

09:52:35 Nicole Otto
09:56:15 May Simmons, Lake County Resident
09:58:55 Diane Rotering, The Mercy Company

BLUE ENVELOPE PROGRAM**Program Overview and Implementation in Other States**

10:01:42 Presiding Officer Amy Regier
10:02:14 Laura Sherley, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 2](#)
[EXHIBIT 3](#)
[EXHIBIT 4](#)
[EXHIBIT 5](#)
[EXHIBIT 6](#)
[EXHIBIT 7](#)

Committee Discussion / Questions

10:10:46 Presiding Officer Amy Regier
10:10:56 Laura Sherley, LSD
10:11:27 Rep. Steven Kelly
10:11:45 Laura Sherley, LSD
10:12:18 Sen. Sue Vinton
10:15:34 Rep. Steven Kelly
10:17:34 Vice Presiding Officer Zooey Zephyr
10:18:09 Laura Sherley, LSD
10:19:31 Sen. Sue Vinton
10:21:06 Rep. Steven Kelly

Public Comment

10:23:05 May Simmons, Lake County Resident
10:24:01 Presiding Officer Amy Regier

10:24:17 **Recessed**

13:13:19 **Reconvened**

13:13:20 Sen. Sue Vinton did not return after the lunch recess.

REFERENCE CHECKS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS**Stakeholder Panel**

13:13:20 Presiding Officer Amy Regier
13:13:43 Jordan Venezia, Police Chief, Kalispell Police Department
13:14:44 Shane Hildenstab, Deputy Public Safety Chief, Department of Corrections (COR)
13:15:22 Andrea Bethel, Probation and Parole Captain, Missoula Region, COR
13:15:57 Scott Van Dyken, Undersheriff, Cascade County
13:16:26 Michael Colyer, Police Chief, Missoula Police Department
13:17:21 Jeremiah Peterson, Sheriff, Missoula County

Committee Discussion / Questions

13:31:34 Rep. Steven Kelly
13:33:04 Sheriff Jeremiah Peterson, Missoula County
13:34:00 Vice Presiding Officer Zooey Zephyr
13:34:17 Laura Sherley, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
13:34:28 Julianne Burkhardt, Legal Staff, LSD
13:35:16 Chief Jordan Venezia, Kalispell Police Department
13:35:48 Presiding Officer Amy Regier
13:35:56 Timothy Allred, Executive Director, Public Safety Officer Standards & Training Council (POST)
13:40:03 Vice Presiding Officer Zooey Zephyr

13:40:51 Sheriff Jeremiah Peterson, Missoula County
13:41:53 Presiding Officer Amy Regier
13:42:08 Chief Jordan Venezia, Kalispell Police Department
13:42:51 Undersheriff Scott Van Dyken, Cascade County
13:45:08 Shane Hildenstab, COR
13:45:55 Sen. Vince Ricci
13:46:31 Sheriff Jeremiah Peterson, Missoula County
13:50:12 Rep. Steven Kelly
13:50:25 Sheriff Jeremiah Peterson, Missoula County
13:52:30 Sen. Vince Ricci
13:52:51 Undersheriff Scott Van Dyken, Cascade County

Public Comment

13:54:13 May Simmons, Lake County Resident

COMMITTEE WORK SESSION

Instructions to Staff

13:56:48 Presiding Officer Amy Regier
13:57:31 Vice Presiding Officer Zooey Zephyr
13:58:10 Rep. Braxton Mitchell
13:58:45 Rep. Steven Kelly
13:59:51 Sen. Vince Ricci
14:00:30 Presiding Officer Amy Regier
[EXHIBIT 8](#)
14:01:00 Vice Presiding Officer Zooey Zephyr
14:01:15 Rep. Steven Kelly
14:01:30 Laura Sherley, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
[EXHIBIT 9](#)
14:02:32 Presiding Officer Amy Regier
14:02:47 Julianne Burkhardt, Legal Staff, LSD
14:04:19 Vice Presiding Officer Zooey Zephyr
14:04:35 Rep. Steven Kelly
14:09:08 Rep. Braxton Mitchell

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY ITEM WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S JURISDICTION

14:09:55 May Simmons, Lake County Resident
14:16:43 Elinor Smith, Montana Public Radio
14:17:22 Presiding Officer Amy Regier

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 14:17:28