

MONTANA INNOCENCE PROJECT NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER



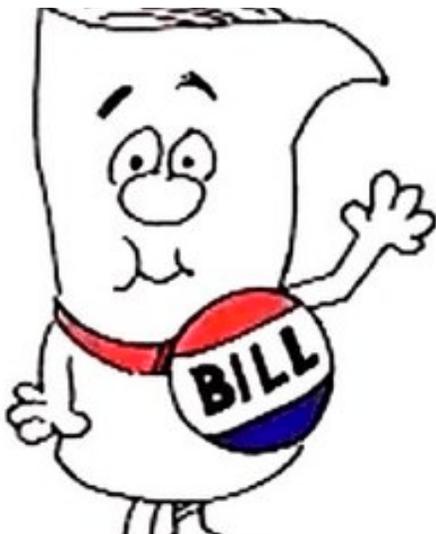
MONTANA
COALITION
FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

SAFETY COALITION

The Montana Innocence Project joins a diverse coalition to improve the justice system.

KATIE GARDING

The Board of Pardons and Parole recommended Katie Garding be transferred from Montana Women's Prison to a pre-release center.



COMPENSATION BILL

The Law & Justice Interim Committee voted to move HJ-36-1 into the 2021 Session as a sponsored bill.

MTIP JOINS RECENTLY LAUNCHED MONTANA PUBLIC SAFETY COALITION

The Montana Innocence Project is a part of the recently formed Montana Coalition for Public Safety – a group that will work with lawmakers, political leaders, and community leaders to improve the justice system in Montana to be more fair, just, and accurate.

*The coalition's principles are to focus on public safety, protect taxpayers, eliminate racial and geographical disparities, require transparency and accountability, **prioritize accuracy to ensure innocent people are not incarcerated**, and end the criminalization of poverty.*

*The coalition's current priorities are to expand mental health and substance use disorder treatment, rethink pre-trial detention, decrease the use of money bail, ensure uniform data gathering and transparency, and **reform the re-entry system for people post-incarceration.***

Other coalition members include Americans for Prosperity-Montana, the ACLU of Montana, The Montana Chamber of Commerce, Western Native Voice, the Frontier Institute, the Montana Budget and Policy Center, the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, the Montana Human Rights Network, Montana Women Vote, and Disability Rights Montana.

KATIE GARDING TO PARTICIPATE IN PRE-RELEASE PROGRAM

*On October 13, Katie Garding stood before the Board of Pardons and Parole for the first time after serving 10 years for a crime she did not commit. After reviewing Katie's exemplary record while incarcerated, letters of support, and statements from family, friends, and community members, including MTIP Executive Director, Amy Sings In The Timber, and pro bono counsel, **the Board denied parole but recommended Katie be transferred from Montana Women's Prison to a pre-release center.** After a minimum of one year in pre-release, she may be released on parole.*

*We do not believe she should be under DOC supervision at all. We believe she is innocent. **MTIP will continue its work to secure Katie's freedom and to overturn her conviction.** Having exhausted all remedies in Montana's courts, we are moving forward with a writ of certiorari to the United States Supreme Court.*

COMPENSATION BILL MOVED INTO 2021 SESSION

*After months of thorough bi-partisan vetting, **the Law & Justice Interim Committee voted to move HJ-36-1 forward into the 2021 Session as a Committee sponsored bill.** The motion passed on an 8-3 roll call vote, with Sen. Diane Sands sponsoring until the general election.*

*Among other things, **HJ-36-1 would set a defined amount of financial compensation per year for people who were wrongfully convicted by the State of Montana.** Exonerees would file claims in a state district court where a judge would determine their eligibility for compensation. Past exonerees would have two years to file their claims. If the exoneree has already won a civil lawsuit against the authorities, then the amount awarded to them would be subtracted from the amount HJ-36-1 offers.*

***This is important now more than ever.** The significant health, safety, and economic obstacles people face post-incarceration are compounded by the economic hardships and mental health tolls resulting from the pandemic.*