

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6360

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As of February 8, 1996

**Title:** An act relating to first-time offenders.

**Brief Description:** Allowing first-time drug offenders to be sentenced under the first-time offender sentencing alternative.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kohl, Prentice, Pelz and Fairley.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Law & Justice: 2/14/96.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

**Staff:** Martin Lovinger (786-7443)

**Background:** Public support for more severe punishment for violent crimes has added to the rapidly increasing number of inmates in the state prison system. One approach that has helped to alleviate the expense and overcrowding of prisons is the first-time offender waiver for nonviolent felonies. Under this procedure, an alternative penalty involving greatly reduced incarceration in jail, instead of prison, can be applied to a defendant who has committed a nonviolent first offense. In 1987, the Legislature removed drug crimes from the list of felonies eligible for the first-time offender waiver. It is felt that restoring nonviolent drug crimes to the list of those eligible for the first-time offender waiver would provide prison space for those who commit violent crimes and save the state significant expenditures on corrections without increasing the overall level of crime.

**Summary of Bill:** The first-time offender waiver can be applied to nonviolent drug-related felonies.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.