

2024 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 672

Commending the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission.

Agreed to by the Senate, April 2, 2025

WHEREAS, the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission, a judicial branch agency that is responsible for developing, implementing, and revising the felony sentencing guidelines used in the circuit courts of the Commonwealth, commemorated its 30th anniversary on January 1, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission (VCSC) was established by legislation in 1994 with a mandate to develop discretionary sentencing guidelines that would assist judges and justices by offering a range of recommended sentencing options; and

WHEREAS, the objective of the VCSC's sentencing guidelines is to promote certainty, consistency, and adequacy of punishment while factoring the seriousness of an offense, the dangerousness of the offender, the importance of deterring individuals from committing criminal offenses, and the potential for using alternative sanctions where appropriate; and

WHEREAS, the VCSC is composed of 17 distinguished citizens of the Commonwealth, including six judges or justices appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, a chairman who is not a member of the judiciary and who is appointed by the Chief Justice and confirmed by the General Assembly, the chairs of the House Committee for Courts of Justice and Senate Committee for Courts of Justice or their designees, three legislative appointees, four gubernatorial appointees, including at least one victim of a crime or representative of a crime victims' organization, and the Attorney General or his designee; and

WHEREAS, beyond its sentencing guidelines, the VCSC provides training and education through seminars, publications, and other materials; the agency has presented more than 1,000 State Bar-approved trainings over the course of its history; and

WHEREAS, the VCSC also conducts pertinent criminal justice research and performs analyses to assess the fiscal impact of proposed criminal justice legislation; the agency has conducted thousands of impact analyses during sessions of the General Assembly, including 306 such analyses in 2025; and

WHEREAS, in the interest of transparency, the VCSC has produced an annual report every year since its inception detailing its work and recommendations, as well as any modifications to the discretionary sentencing guidelines adopted by the commission; and

WHEREAS, the VCSC has led or supported major initiatives to modernize and advance the Commonwealth's sentencing guidelines, including the Sentencing Worksheets and Interactive File Transfer project, a web-based application designed for automating the sentencing guidelines process, and the Virginia Pretrial Data Project, a continuation of a program started by the Virginia State Crime Commission that collects data pertaining to the Commonwealth's pretrial system; and

WHEREAS, through its maintenance of the Commonwealth's sentencing guidelines, the VCSC strives to reduce unwarranted sentencing disparity and to increase consistency and predictability in sentencing outcomes by providing a set of objective and consistent standards to reduce variation in sentencing outcomes for defendants convicted of similar offenses who have similar criminal histories; and

WHEREAS, the accomplishments of the VCSC are the result of the hard work and dedication of its members and staff, who have enhanced the Commonwealth's criminal justice system by advancing fair and effective sentencing practices; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission hereby be commended for its legacy of service on the occasion of its 30th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's admiration for the agency's contributions to the administration of justice in the Commonwealth.

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