**DATE**: March 31, 2000

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT ANALYSIS

**BILL #**: HB 2085

**RELATING TO**: Drug Trafficking

**SPONSOR(S)**: Representative Billirakis

TIED BILL(S): None

## ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

(2) CRIMINAL JUSTICE APPROPRIATIONS

(3)

(4)

(5)

# I. SUMMARY:

HB 2085 addresses "designer drugs" and drug offense penalties in Florida. The major features of the bill are described as follows:

The substance 1,4 Butanediol, which is converted upon ingestion to the controlled substance gamma hydrobutyric acid (GHB), is made a Schedule II controlled substance.

The penalties for numerous controlled substance offenses involving methamphetamine are increased by one felony degree.

Three new drug trafficking offenses are created to address trafficking in 1,4 Butanediol, GHB, and "phenthylamines," such as MDMA ("Ecstasy") and other similar drugs. The capital trafficking offense involving amphetamine, methamphetamine and certain specified mixtures is amended to include the manufacture of any of these substances.

Sentencing language relevant to the sentencing of certain drug trafficking offenses is amended to address the interpretation of one Florida district court of appeal that the current sentencing language precludes habitual offender sentencing.

Objects used for unlawfully introducing nitrous oxide into the human body are listed as "drug paraphernalia."

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## II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

## A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

1.	Less Government	Yes []	No []	N/A [x]
2.	Lower Taxes	Yes []	No []	N/A [x]
3.	Individual Freedom	Yes []	No []	N/A [x]
4.	Personal Responsibility	Yes []	No []	N/A [x]
5.	Family Empowerment	Yes []	No []	N/A [x]

For any principle that received a "no" above, please explain:

#### **B. PRESENT SITUATION:**

## 1. Controlled Substance Categories

Under s. 893.03, F.S., Florida law categorizes controlled substances into five schedules. Drugs are placed among the five schedules depending on their potential for abuse, currently accepted medical use (if any), and the degree of risk they pose to public safety. Schedule I are the most dangerous drugs with "a high potential for abuse and . . . no currently accepted medical use . . . and its use under medical supervision does not meet accepted safety standards." On the other hand, Schedule V drugs are the least dangerous drugs with "a low potential for abuse . . . and a currently accepted medical use . . . and abuse . . . may lead to limited physical or psychological dependence . . ."

## 2. GHB, GBL and 1,4 Butanediol

Presently, the substance gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) is listed as a Schedule II controlled substance in s. 893.03(2)(b)10., F.S.<sup>1</sup> A substance in Schedule II has a high potential for abuse and has a currently accepted but severely restricted medical use in treatment in the United States, and abuse of the substance may lead to severe psychological or physical dependence. [s. 893.03(2), F.S.].

GHB is a Schedule II substance because the substance has some limited medical use. GHB has been granted orphan drug status for research into the use of the substance for the treatment of narcolepsy. Other Schedule II substances include opium, morphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, and phencyclidine. Section 893.13, F.S., prohibits the possession, purchase, sale, delivery or manufacture of these substances and other controlled substances. Section 893.135, F.S., is Florida's "drug trafficking" statute, and prohibits the sale, purchase, manufacture, delivery or importation involving a significant

As is the case with most controlled substances listed in this section, when a substance is listed in a "schedule" it also means various forms and derivatives of the substances including its isomers, esters, ethers, salts, and salts of isomers, esters, and ethers, whenever the existence of such isomers, esters, ethers, and salts is possible within its specific chemical designation.

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weight of opium, morphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, phencyclidine, and a small group of other controlled substances. Presently, there is no offense of trafficking in GHB.

On June 15, 1999, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an advisory to all health care professionals indicating their concern about the use and misuse of consumer products, some of which are labeled as dietary supplements, and other products containing GHB, gamma butyrolactone (GBL) and 1,4 Butanediol (BOL or BD). The FDA noted that it is illegal to manufacture and distribute GHB, GBL, or BD-containing products for human consumption. The agency reported that more than 122 illnesses and three deaths have been reported to the agency as a result of using products containing these ingredients.

To warn consumers about the dangers of these products, the FDA issued flyers in which it was noted that BD, GBL, and GHB are used to make floor stripper, paint thinner, and other industrial products. The FDA stated that it had determined that dietary supplements containing these substances are really unapproved drugs because of their effect on the body, and that it is illegal to sell anything for human consumption containing these substances.

The FDA noted that in 1990 it had banned use of GHB but some companies switched ingredients to GBL, and after warnings about GBL, switched to BD. The agency stated that the three substance are very similar chemicals. GBL and BD are converted in the body to GHB with the same "dangerous effects," noted by the agency to include breathing problems, coma, vomiting, seizures and sometimes death.

GBL and BD have the same potential as GHB to be used as "date rape drugs," and like GHB the drugs are generally found in those settings where teenagers and young adults congregate such as at "rave clubs." Substance abuse at rave clubs is not limited to GHB, GBL, or BD, but runs the gamut of illegal substances, particularly MDMA ("Ecstasy"), a Schedule I controlled substance (s. 893.036(1)(a)39., F.S.), and other substances passed off as MDMA.

According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) legal staff who conferred with the department's chemists, GBL is already covered in Schedule II as an ester. However, 1,4 Butanediol is not covered in Schedule II and cannot be covered as an isomer, ester, ether, salt, or salt of an isomer, ester, or ester of GHB.

## 2. Methamphetamines

Methamphetamine abuse has been a persistent problem in this country for over 50 years. During World War II, amphetamine was widely used as a stimulant for soldiers. Dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine) and methamphetamine (Methedrine) became readily available. Drugs of Abuse, Drug Enforcement Administration (1997) (unless otherwise noted, this is the reference source for this section). Responding to the spread of amphetamine in the 1960s, the federal food and drug laws were amended in 1965 to curb the amphetamine black market. Many pharmaceutical amphetamine products were removed from the market and doctors began prescribing the remaining products less freely. The black market, however, continued to expand, and clandestine laboratory production mushroomed to meet demand, especially methamphetamine laboratories on the West Coast. Clandestine laboratories continue to the present date to be the primary producer of amphetamines distributed in the black market.

In the 1999 Florida Drug Control Strategy, the Office of Drug Control (ODC) stated that Florida has a growing methamphetamine problem, and noted large seizures of

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methamphetamine throughout the state. The ODC also noted that the addictive qualities of this drug, along with the extreme psychotic and violent reactions of users, make methamphetamine a highly dangerous drug.

Methamphetamine is a Schedule II substance under s. 893.03(2)(c)(4), F.S. Under s. 893.13, F.S., which prohibits the possession, purchase, sale, delivery or manufacture of controlled substances listed in s. 893.03, F.S., the penalties for a limited number of offenses under s. 893.13, F.S., are triggered, in part, by the weight of the substance involved. The type of substance involved is relevant to almost every offense under s. 893.13, F.S. Only a limited number of controlled substances, when possessed, purchased, sold, delivered, or manufactured are subject to the greatest penalty, by virtue of the person committing, typically, a first degree felony. Substances listed in s. 893.03(2)(c), F.S., fall in the middle range of penalties by virtue of the person committing, typically, a second degree felony. For example, sale of cocaine (s. 893.03(2)(a), F.S.), within 1,000 feet of a convenience business is a first degree felony; the same sale involving methamphetamine (s. 893.039(2)(c), F.S.), is a second degree felony.

#### 3. Stanford v. State

In <u>Stanford v. State</u>, 706 So.2d 900 (Fla. 1st DCA 1998), the facts before the appellate court were that Stanford received a "habitual felony offender" sentence because of a conviction for trafficking in 28 or more grams of cocaine, a first degree felony. He received 20 years of imprisonment followed by 15 years of probation. The maximum penalty for a first degree felony is 30 years, absent specific statutory authority for a greater penalty.

Prior to the enactment of the "Three Strikes" legislation (HB 121; chapter 99-188, L.O.F.) last session, which modified the drug trafficking statute, it provided that a defendant convicted of certain lower-weight drug trafficking offenses "shall be sentenced pursuant to the sentencing guidelines and pay a fine of \$50,000." The reference to the sentencing guidelines was deleted by the legislation and replaced with a reference to the Criminal Punishment Code.

The <u>Stanford</u> Court interpreted the inclusion of the word "shall" in the italicized provision to require that Stanford be sentenced pursuant to the sentencing guidelines. On the basis of this statutory language, the court held that Stanford could not be sentenced under s. 775.084, F.S., the Habitual Offender Act. The court's holding was primarily based on a literal construction of the statute.

In reaching its ruling the court noted that, in 1993, the Legislature amended the Habitual Offender statute (s. 775.084, F.S.), to exempt drug possession and purchase offenses under s. 893.13, F.S. That same year, the Legislature also amended s. 893.135, F.S., to eliminate mandatory minimum terms for certain lower-weight trafficking offenses, such as trafficking in 28 grams or more of cocaine, and required instead that a defendant convicted of any of these trafficking offenses be sentenced pursuant to the sentencing guidelines.

The court's interpretation of the statute may not account for several important considerations, nor be consistent with the weight of the case law. In 1993, the "sentenced pursuant to the sentencing guidelines" language was inserted in s. 893.135, F.S., and the exemptions for certain drug possession and purchasing offenses were specifically exempted in s. 775.084, F.S. To accept the court's interpretation is to accept as plausible that the Legislature meant to amend s. 775.084, F.S., to specifically exempt "violation[s] of s. 893.13, F.S., relating to the purchase or the possession of a controlled substance" but

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chose to employ an indirect approach (the amendment of s. 893.135, F.S.) to exempt drug **trafficking offenses under s. 893.135, F.S.**, from habitual offender sentences pursuant to s. 775.084, F.S.

To the extent the <u>Stanford</u> Court is suggesting that the mandatory penalties eliminated from the trafficking statute in 1993 are analogous to the penalties under s. 775.084, F.S., the analogy is incorrect. Courts were required to impose the mandatory minimum terms under s. 893.135, F.S., prior to the elimination of those terms. The principle underlying such mandatory sentencing is certainty of punishment. Conversely, the habitual felony offender provision of s. 775.084, F.S., which basically doubled the statutory maximum periods under s. 775.082, F.S., is permissive or discretionary, not mandatory. <u>State v. Hudson</u>, 698 So.2d 831, 832 (Fla. 1997), citing cases.

In the Habitual Offender statute, the Legislature has expressly authorized the courts to impose a habitual felony offender sentence if the defendant has a current felony offense and has previously been convicted of two or more prior felony offenses in a designated time period relative to the commission of the current felony offense. The only other limitation on the court's discretion is that the current offense and one of the two prior felony offenses cannot be a possession or purchase offense under s. 893.13, F.S. This language establishes that the use of the word 'may' is merely a means of conferring upon the court the authority to impose a habitual felony offender sentence on a defendant who qualifies for such sentencing. See e.g., Comcoa, Inc. v. Coe, 587 So.2d 474, 478 (Fla. 3rd DCA 1991). By so interpreting the language in s. 893.135, F.S., to preclude any sentence other than a guidelines sentence, the Stanford Court has effectively limited the courts' exercise of their statutorily conferred authority to impose a habitual felony offender sentence.

The Legislature enacted the Habitual Offender statute, "to allow enhanced penalties for those defendants who meet objective guidelines indicating recidivism." State v. Rucker, 613 So.2d 460, 461 (Fla. 1993), quoting Eutsey v. State, 383 So.2d 219, 223 (Fla. 1980). The Florida Supreme Court has stated that "[t]he entire focus of the statute [s. 775.084] is not on the present offense, but on the criminal offender's prior record." Ross v. State, 601 So.2d 1190, 1193 (Fla. 1992). The habitual felony offender provision is intended to enhance the punishment for the current penalty based on the defendant's extensive criminal history. The enhanced punishment is incident to the defendant's prior felony offenses. The habitual felony offender provision prescribes a longer sentence for the current offense before the court for sentencing.

The Legislature amended the Habitual Offender statute to provide that "the sentencing guidelines do not apply to habitual offender sentences." <u>Studnicka v. State</u>, 679 So.2d 819, 821 (Fla. 3rd DCA 1996); <u>State v. Kendrick</u>, 596 So.2d 1153, 1154 (Fla. 5th DCA), *review dismissed* 613 So.2d 5 (Fla. 1992) ("The legislature amended the habitual offender statute to make habitual offender sentencing independent of the sentencing guidelines.").

Under s. 921.001(4)(b)2., F.S. (1995), the particular provision of s. 921.001, F.S., that appears to be relevant to Stanford's offense date, "[t]he 1994 guidelines apply to sentencing for all felonies, except capital felonies committed on or after January 1, 1994." This statement appears to be no less directive and mandatory than the language the <a href="Stanford">Stanford</a> court relies on in s. 893.135, F.S. However, the courts have understood that this provision applies to "original sentencing"; this provision does not supersede the authority conferred upon the courts under s. 775.084, F.S., to impose a habitual felony offender sentence on a defendant who qualifies for such sentencing. See, e.g., Studnicka, 679 So.2d at 822 ("The legislature has unequivocally said that the guidelines now cover only ordinary sentencing, not habitual offender sentencing.").

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While the <u>Stanford</u> court applied a literal interpretation of the drug trafficking statute, "[i]t is well-settled that, according to the context and surrounding circumstances, a statutory 'shall' is to be read as a 'may' and vice versa." Comcoa, 587 So.2d at 477.

## 4. Nitrous Oxide and Drug Paraphernalia

Nitrous oxide, commonly known as "laughing gas," is an oxygenated compound (dinitrogen monoxide). The primary, legitimate use of nitrous oxide today is by doctors and dentists for general anesthesia. Relevant to the illicit use of nitrous oxide, this substance is generally grouped with other anesthetics under the general category of "inhalants." Within the subgrouping of anesthetics, nitrous oxide is the principal substance of abuse.

Section 877.111(1), F.S., provides that it is unlawful for any person to inhale or ingest, or to possess with the intent to breathe, inhale, or drink any compound, liquid, or chemical containing one of a specified list of 15 substances, including nitrous oxide, for the purpose of inducing a condition of intoxication or which distorts or disturbs the auditory, visual or mental processes. Exempted from this subsection is use of these substances as part of the care or treatment of a disease or injury by a practitioner licensed under chapters 458, 459, 464, or 466, F.S., or to beverages controlled by the provisions of chapters 561, 562, 563, 564, or 565, F.S.

Section 877.111(2), F.S., provides that it is unlawful for any person to possess, buy, sell, or otherwise transfer any substance specified in subsection (1) for the purpose of inducing or aiding any other person to violate the provision of subsection (1). Section 877.111(3), F.S., provides that any violation of subsections (1) or (2) is a second degree misdemeanor.

According to one news report, inhalants, including nitrous oxide, "have been widely used in the underground club scene for at least three decades, but are now being used among the more mainstream party crowds in clubs." Parvaz, "Inhalants are common, yet especially dangerous," Seattle Post-Intelligencer Reporter, August 3, 1999.

For medical use, nitrous oxide is a compressed gas and is stored in metal tanks. Nitrous oxide tanks used for illicit nitrous oxide use are typically procured by street dealers through burglaries of medical/dental offices and distributors, illegally obtaining a legitimate nitrous oxide use permit, or misrepresenting themselves as legitimate users. Some auto supply stores also have tanks of nitrous oxide. Other means of obtaining nitrous oxide are through pressurized food dispensing containers and nitrous oxide dispensers ("whippets"), small canisters used for making homemade whipping cream. Both can be legally obtained. Whippets can be procured at gourmet food shops, "head shops," restaurant supply stores, hardware stores, and through Internet mail-order services. A box of twenty four whippets can be purchased from a store for approximately 12 to 14 dollars. These canisters contain four to eight grams of nitrous oxide.

Nitrous oxide can be inhaled from a tank by use of a hose and a mask. The gas can also be inhaled from balloons filled from tanks or canisters. Dealers typically charge three to five dollars for each balloon. The gas in a whippet fills approximately one balloon, the amount a typical user would inhale at one time. Pressurized cans of whipped cream can also be held and the valve pressed in such a way to permit only release of the propellant. Other methods of transmission include releasing the gas in a room or automobile and placing a plastic bag filled with the gas over the person's head.

Section 893.147(1)(b), F.S., in part, provides that it is a first degree misdemeanor for a person to use, or possess with intent to use, drug paraphernalia to ingest or inhale a

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controlled substance in violation of chapter 893, F.S. Subsection (2)(b), in part, provides that it is a third degree felony for a person to deliver, possess with intent to deliver, or manufacture with intent to deliver drug paraphernalia, knowing, or under circumstances where one should reasonably know, that it will be used to ingest or inhale a controlled substance in violation of chapter 893, F.S. Subsection (3) provides that it is a second degree felony for any person 18 years of age or over to violate subsection (2) by delivering drug paraphernalia to a person under 18 years of age.

Section 893.145, F.S., defines "drug paraphernalia." The definition includes, in part, all equipment, products and materials of any kind which are used, intended for use, or designed for use in producing, storing, containing, ingesting, inhaling, or otherwise introducing into the human body a controlled substance in violation of chapter 893, F.S. An extensive, but not exclusive, list of objects follows. The particular objects listed do not capture objects used for the illegal inhalation of nitrous oxide.

Section 893.148, F.S., provides a list of factors that shall be taken into account by the court or jury, in addition to all other logically relevant factors, in determining whether an object is drug paraphernalia. For example, the proximity of the object to controlled substances and the existence of any residue of controlled substances on the object are relevant factors that must be considered.

## C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

HB 2085 amends various sections of the Florida law to facilitate prosecution and punishment of offenses involving "designer drugs" and other controlled substances. See Section by Section Analysis.

## D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

**Section 1.** Amends s. 893.03, F.S., to schedule 1,4 Butanediol as a Schedule II controlled substance, thereby facilitating prosecution of offenses involving this substance.

**Section 2.** Amends s. 893.13, F.S., to place the scheduling reference to methamphetamine (s. 893.03(2)(c)4., F.S.), in the highest penalty provisions of s. 893.13, F.S., relevant to a number of drug offenses. For example, under current law, sale of a controlled substance scheduled in s. 893.03 (1)(a), (1)(b), (1)(d), (2)(a), or (2)(b), within 1,000 feet of a convenience business is a first degree felony. The bill would add a reference to (2)(c)4., thereby making it a first degree felony to possess methamphetamine within 1,000 feet of a convenience business.

**Section 3.** Amends s. 893.135, F.S., to create three new trafficking offenses and modify a current trafficking offense.

<u>First</u>, the offense of trafficking in GHB is created. In each of the categories described below the offense is a first degree felony, and the minimum penalty is graduated depending on the quantity of the substance involved, as follows:

1 kilogram or more but less than 5 kilograms - mandatory minimum term of 3 years imprisonment and \$50,000 fine.

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5 kilograms or more but less than 10 kilograms - mandatory minimum term of 7 years imprisonment and

\$100,000 fine.

► 10 kilograms or more - mandatory minimum term of 15

years imprisonment and \$250,000 fine.

When the amount involved is 150 kilograms or more and the person knows the probable result of the manufacture or importation of the GHB would be the death of any person, the offense is a capital felony which also provides a \$250,000 fine.

<u>Second</u>, the offense of trafficking in 1,4 Butanediol is created. In each of the categories described below the offense is a first degree felony, and the minimum penalty is graduated depending on the quantity of the substance involved, as follows:

1 kilogram or more but less than 5 kilograms - mandatory minimum term of 3 years imprisonment and \$50,000 fine.

5 kilograms or more but less than 10 kilograms - mandatory minimum term of 7 years imprisonment and \$100,000 fine.

10 kilograms or more - mandatory minimum term of 15

years imprisonment and \$250,000 fine.

When the amount involved is 150 kilograms or more and the person knows the probable result of the manufacture or importation of the 1,4 Butanediol would be the death of any person, the offense is a capital felony which also provides a \$250,000 fine.

<u>Third</u>, the offense of trafficking in Phenthylamines (which includes MDMA or "Ecstasy" and homologous substances which are scheduled in s. 893.03(1)(c), F.S.) is created. Phenethylamines consist of any of the following substances individually, or in combination, or in any mixture:

- 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)
- 4-Bromo-2, 5-dimethoxyamphetamine
- 4-Bromo-2, 5-dimethoxyphenethylamine
- 2,5-Dimethoxyamphetamine
- 2,5-Dimethoxy-4-ethylamphetamine (DOET)

N-ethylamphetamine

N-Hydroxy-3, 4-methylenedioxyamphetamine

5-Methoxy-3, 4-methylenedioxyamphetamine

4-methoxyamphetamine

- 4-Methyl-2, 5-dimethoxyamphetamine
- 3,4-Methylenedioxy-N-ethylamphetamine
- 3,4 Methylenedioxyamphetamine
- N,N-dimethylamphetamine
- 3,4,5-Trimethoxyamphetamine

In each of the categories described below the offense is a first degree felony, and the minimum penalty is graduated depending on the quantity of the substance involved, as follows:

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10 grams or more but less than 200 grams - mandatory minimum term of 3 years imprisonment and \$50,000 fine.

200 grams or more but less than 400 grams - mandatory minimum term of 7 years imprisonment and \$100,000

fine.

400 grams or more - mandatory minimum term of 15 years imprisonment and \$250,000 fine.

When the amount involved is 30 kilograms or more and the person knows the probable result of the manufacture or importation of the phenethylamines would be the death of any person the offense is a capital felony which also provides a \$250,000 fine.

Also, section 3 amends the current capital felony trafficking offense involving importation into this state of 400 grams or more of amphetamine, methamphetamine, or certain, specified mixtures to include the manufacture of 400 grams or more of such substances.

In addition, section 3 also deletes the current language included in reference to sentencing under the Criminal Punishment Code for various lower-weight trafficking offenses and provides that the offenses are punishable as provided in s. 775.082, F.S., s. 775.083, F.S., or s. 775.084, F.S. The effect of this change is to allow habitual offender sentencing, which might otherwise be precluded by the First District Court of Appeal's interpretation of the former language providing for sentencing pursuant to the sentencing guidelines, and the extension of this holding to effect the similar language in the current law which provides that sentencing is pursuant to the Criminal Punishment Code. The change does not preclude sentencing under a Code scored sentence or other sentence greater than the mandatory minimum term.

**Section 4.** Amends s. 893.145, F.S., to add to the definition of "drug paraphernalia" items used to facilitate the unlawful inhalation of nitrous oxide and other chemical substances in violation of s. 877.111, F.S.

**Section 5.** Provides an effective date of October 1, 2000.

## III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

# A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

## 1. Revenues:

See, Fiscal Comments.

## 2. Expenditures:

See, Fiscal Comments.

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# **B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:**

1. Revenues:

N/A

2. Expenditures:

N/A

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

N/A

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

HB 2085 was on the March 29, 2000 agenda of the Criminal Justice Impact Conference but was temporarily postponed.

## IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill is exempt from the requirements of Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution because it is a criminal law.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

## V. COMMENTS:

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

N/A

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

N/A

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	C. OTHER COMMENTS:		
	N/A		
VI.	AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE	CHANGES:	
	N/A		
VII.	SIGNATURES:		
	COMMITTEE ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT: Prepared by:	Staff Director:	
	David M. De La Paz	David M. De La Paz	