

1 **RESOLUTION: REFORMING WASHINGTON’S “3-STRIKES” LAW**
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3 **Whereas:** RCW 9.94A.010 requires that punishment for crimes be proportionate to the
4 seriousness of the crimes and commensurate with punishment provided for similar crimes;
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6 **Whereas:** Initiative 593, approved in 1993, states: “Punishments for criminal offenses should
7 be proportionate to both the seriousness of the crime and the prior criminal history. By
8 sentencing three-time most serious offenders to prison for life without the possibility of
9 parole, the people intend to: improve public safety by placing the most dangerous criminals in
10 prison.”
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12 **Whereas:** RCW 9.94A, which enacts the reforms called for under Initiative 593 and is often
13 referred to as the “3-Strikes” law, includes Robbery 2 and Assault 2 on the list of “most
14 serious offenses” that trigger life imprisonment;
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16 **Whereas:** Washington's Sentencing Guidelines Commission (The Commission), the state
17 agency charged with evaluating sentencing policies and recommending modifications to the
18 Governor and Legislature, recommended to the Legislature 2001 that it remove Robbery 2,
19 and consider removing some forms of Assault 2, from the list of offenses triggering life
20 imprisonment under 3-Strikes, noting that the range of behaviors associated with Robbery 2
21 and some instances of Assault 2 do not rise to the level of “most serious” offenses and that,
22 specifically, in the case of Robbery 2, these behaviors pose “little risk of physical injury”;
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24 **Whereas:** Life imprisonment for crimes that are not “most serious” violates the
25 proportionality requirements of RCW 9.94A.010 and I-593, violates the intent in I-593 to
26 address the “most dangerous” criminals, is unjust to individuals serving life sentences for
27 these crimes and to their families, causes significant unnecessary expense, and reduces respect
28 for the law;
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30 **Whereas:** Each year, bills to comply with the recommendations of The Commission are
31 introduced in the state legislature without success;
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33 **Whereas:** Racial disparity exists throughout Washington State’s criminal justice system but
34 is perhaps at its most severe in the 3-Strikes population which comprises 45% African
35 Americans in comparison to our state population which is 3.5% African American.
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37 **Whereas:** The 2006 Washington State Democratic Party platform declares the following:
38 “We also recognize that in the pursuit of civil order, we cannot abandon the legal principles
39 upon which a free and democratic society relies. We ... believe that criminal justice and
40 human rights are linked.”
41

42 **Therefore Be it Resolved:** That we call upon Washington’s governor and each of our state’s
43 legislators to vigorously support and defend legislation that removes Robbery 2 and any
44 Assault 2 or other offenses not reasonably qualifying as “most dangerous” and “most serious”
45 from the list of offenses that trigger life imprisonment under 3-Strikes;
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47 **Furthermore be it Resolved:** That we call on Washington’s governor and each of our state’s
48 legislators to acknowledge and address the racial disparity in our criminal justice system
49 which manifests in perhaps its most extreme form among those incarcerated under
50 Washington’s 3-Strikes law, and to act with due haste to eliminate this disparity.