

Las Vegas Sun

Las Vegas court raises bail amounts for crimes

New standard bail schedule sets standards for categories of crime

By [Jackie Valley](#) ([contact](#))

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It will cost criminals more money to operate in Las Vegas, courtesy of increased bail amounts that went into effect earlier this month.

The new standard bail schedule for Las Vegas Township Justice Court, effective Sept. 1, streamlines the policy by setting bail amounts according to the category of offense versus the previous charge-by-charge listing.

For instance, that means robbery and ex-felon possession of a firearm — both category B felonies, which previously carried different bail amounts — now have bail amounts of \$20,000 based on the category of the offenses.

“It’ll be more consistent and clear,” said Judge Joe Bonaventure, chair of the Justice Court Criminal Process Committee, which discussed and made the bail changes. “The old bail schedule really (had) a number of exceptions. It started to get really confusing.”

The changes reduce the schedule to a single-page document versus the old, multi-page schedule that had not been significantly updated for at least seven years — the length of time Bonaventure has been on the bench, he said.

The following list represents the new bail amounts for felony charges in Justice Court:

- Attempted murder — no bail / set in court
- Battery domestic violence resulting in substantial bodily harm (no DW) or committed by strangulation or third offense — \$15,000
- DUI resulting in death or substantial bodily harm — no bail / set in court
- All other Category A felonies — no bail / set in court
- All other Category B felonies — \$20,000
- All other Category C felonies — \$10,000
- All other Category D and E felonies — \$5,000

When the committee, made up of judges, began exploring whether to update the bail schedule, it realized

Las Vegas' bail amounts lagged in comparison to other jurisdictions, such as San Diego and Los Angeles, Bonaventure said.

Meanwhile, Metro Police encouraged the committee to increase bail amounts, specifically for gun crimes, vehicle theft- and vice-related crimes, Bonaventure said.

Metro spokesman Bill Cassell, who praised the collaboration between law enforcement and the judicial system, said police hope the changes deter criminals from operating in Las Vegas given the more expensive bail amounts.

"It's not a sleepover at CCDC (Clark County Detention Center) anymore," he said. "It's a significant amount."

Bonaventure said the bail increases vary depending on the charge and what category offense it falls under. Some bail amounts as much as quadrupled, he said.

In deciding the new amounts, the judges' two main concerns were whether the dollar amounts ensured the suspects would appear in court and whether they protected the safe-being of the community, Bonaventure said.

The judges did, however, take into account Metro's requests — including for auto theft, a crime police have been trying to curb since noticing an uptick earlier this year.

Bail for grand larceny auto increased from \$3,000 to \$10,000. If the vehicle is worth more than \$2,500, bail doubles to \$20,000, Bonaventure said.

The updated bail schedule also eliminates a formerly cumbersome process to set bail each time the Nevada Legislature approved a new criminal offense, Bonaventure said. The default standard bail amount for new offenses was \$3,000, but if the offense was more serious in nature, a higher bail amount needed a vote for approval.

Now, he said, the amounts are pre-determined because of the bail's correlation to each category of offenses.

Justice Court officials posted the [new bail schedule online](#), in addition to informing Las Vegas bar associations and bail bond companies.

So far, Bonaventure said the judicial system hasn't received negative feedback. He said the committee spent considerable time ensuring the fairness of the new amounts.

"We really do treat it seriously," he said. "The right to reasonable bail is a fundamental right."

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