



ARVADA
United Methodist Church

AUMC'S JUSTICE IN ACTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS A "NO" VOTE ON PROP 132

Approved by committee vote on August 4, 2026

PROPOSITION 132 – Increasing Criminal Penalties for the Possession and Sale of Synthetic Opiates Such as Fentanyl

WHAT THIS INITIATIVE WOULD DO

If passed, this initiative would amend Colorado statutes to increase penalties for criminal offenses related to synthetic opiates such as fentanyl. All offenses related to distribution, manufacturing, dispensing, and selling synthetic opiates would be classified as the highest level of felony (Level 1) requiring 8-32 years in prison, regardless of the amount of drugs involved. The initiative removes an incentive to report and stay at the scene of a drug overdose. All offenses related to possession of synthetic opiates would be considered felonies regardless of amount, and regardless of whether the person knew that the drugs they possessed included synthetic opiates. Felonies for possession of synthetic opiates may not be vacated and are subject to added habitual criminal penalties regardless of the amount.

[Text of the initiative](#) (formerly Initiative #85)

ARGUMENTS FOR THE INITIATIVE

Proponents claim that this initiative is necessary to fight the impact of fentanyl in the state. Fentanyl accounted for nearly half of all drug overdose deaths in the Colorado in 2025. Very small amounts of fentanyl can be deadly, and so it is appropriate to consider the selling or possessing of even small amounts as felonies. By classifying possession of less than a gram of fentanyl as a Level 4 felony rather than a Level 1 misdemeanor, offenders are eligible for mandatory drug treatment that they otherwise would not be eligible for if they were charged with a misdemeanor.

Supporters: [Advance Colorado](#)

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE INITIATIVE

Opponents claim that this initiative would require harsh sentencing in any cases involving fentanyl, including first-time offenders who are not even aware that a pill contains fentanyl. A college student who shares a pill with a friend would face the same sentencing (8-32 years in prison) as the highest-level drug trafficker. The friend who takes the pill would have a felony on their record rather than a misdemeanor, even if they didn't know what was in the pill (as is often the case with fentanyl). Colorado appropriately addressed the fentanyl problem in 2022, when the legislature passed a bill providing that the possession of 1-4 grams of fentanyl would be a Level 4 drug felony

requiring mandatory treatment. Colorado’s Legislative Council estimates that if this initiative is passed, 900 more people would be sent to jail annually, ultimately at a cost of nearly \$5 million each year. While proponents tout the availability of drug treatment, the initiative does not provide any additional funding for treatment.

Opponents: Coloradans for Real Safety Solutions, [Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition](#), [Bell Policy Center](#)

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

2026 Colorado Election Blue Book – Proposition 132 (mailed to voters)

[Ballotpedia](#)

JUSTICE IN ACTION COMMITTEE POSITION ON THIS INITIATIVE

As a committee and pursuant to a consensus vote, **we oppose this initiative and urge United Methodists to vote against it.**

OUR REASONS FOR THIS POSITION

The number of fentanyl deaths in our state, while down from the peak of the opioid crisis, continues to be unacceptably high. However, we agree with the Common Sense Institute that “[a] comprehensive public health strategy, paired with targeted law enforcement and community support” is necessary to combat this problem. We cannot incarcerate our way to a solution, and research has long shown that extending prison sentences has little to no impact on drug use or overdose deaths. We disagree with this initiative’s focus is on sweeping more people into jail without regard to the nature of their crimes or contexts and without any additional individual or community supports.

Our United Methodist Social Principles support accountability for criminal offenses, but they also call for fair and proportional sentencing and a restorative approach to criminal justice. This initiative would treat a very low-level addict the same as a high-level drug trafficker and does not differentiate based on the intent of the person. The initiative’s elimination of the ability to vacate a felony conviction upon successful drug treatment also is contrary to our call for successful reintegration of offenders into the life of the community.

In the case of substance abuse and drug crimes, our Social Principles call on us to support generous public programs designed to raise awareness, treat addiction, and support restoration and reintegration. There is no funding in this bill that is consistent with those values, and Colorado already struggles to provide effective treatment for substance abuse. Mandating that low-level drug offenders be labeled felons so that they are eligible for non-existent treatment opportunities does not help anyone. The \$5 million required to imprison more people each year under this initiative would be better spent elsewhere.

WHAT WE CONSIDERED IN TAKING THIS POSITION

UMC sources considered:

- Relevant provisions of the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church (attached)
- [“Humanizing Criminal Justice.”](#) United Methodist Church 2016 Book of Resolutions #5031
- Committee discussions

External sources considered:

- [History](#) and [text](#) of the ballot initiative available from the Colorado Secretary of State
- [“Initiative 85 – Fiscal Impact Statement.”](#) Colorado Legislative Council Staff (8/11/25)
- [Ballotpedia resources and analysis](#)
- Reports and analyses:
 - Advance Colorado, [“Anti-Fentanyl Measure”](#)
 - [“Colorado’s Fentanyl Problem and the Economic Costs,”](#) Common Sense Institute, June 2025
 - Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition, [“Get the Facts on Prop 132.”](#)
 - Bell Policy Center, [Colorado Ballot Guide 2026](#)

UMC SOCIAL PRINCIPLES 2025-28 – EXCERPTS RELEVANT TO PROPOSITION 132**Para. 162 III. THE SOCIAL COMMUNITY**

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OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES

A. Substance Abuse, Alcohol, and Tobacco – Substance abuse refers to both the devastating psychological and physiological effects of dependence and to the broader social consequences of abuse. In responding to the widespread realities of substance abuse disorders, we begin with the recognition of the devastating impacts of addiction and of the misuse and abuse of legal and illegal substances in the lives of individual users, extended families, and entire communities.

In many parts of the world, opioid and other substance abuse has reached crisis proportions. The church supports programs and policies that comprehensively address the causes and cures of debilitating addictions. We call upon society to refrain from judging people who are addicted and upon governments at all levels to provide resources commensurate with the scope of the problem.

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Para. 163 IV. THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY

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C. Restorative Justice – The Gospels place a premium on the restoration of right relationships (Matthew 18:15-20). When relationships are violated or broken through crimes or wrongdoing, such restoration is critically important. We, therefore, urge governments to develop systems that emphasize restorative justice, which requires people who have committed crimes to make amends for their offenses, and allows victims, if they elect to do so, to share with offenders how they have been harmed. Restorative justice seeks to prioritize the victim and the victim’s family. It also seeks to repair damages, right wrongs, and bring healing to the victim, the offender, families, and the community.

We urge congregations, governments, and businesses to support diversion programs that allow those who have committed offenses to receive counseling, education, skills training, community service, and other assistance to help them become fully contributing members of society. We encourage citizens to partner with law enforcement personnel in local community to create alternatives to practices that emphasize retribution rather than restoration.

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E. Criminal Justice –

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We believe that offenders must be held accountable for criminal actions, particularly those that result in a loss of life or livelihood, so we support measures that prevent, deter, or eliminate crimes, and set apart dangerous offenders. While insisting on accountability, we are also committed to fair and proportional sentencing and to the humane treatment of those imprisoned. We strongly support programs in prisons designed to promote rehabilitation and restoration of inmates...

In our communities, we support measures designed to address the root causes of crime, including poverty and the lack of educational opportunities, recreational activities, substance abuse treatment and counseling, mental health services, and job training...