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**California Three Strikes is Destroying Our Budget and Damaging Families**  
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*By Elizabeth Stewart*



Right now in California, people are being laid off, pot holes in the roads are getting bigger, college fees are increasing and the homeless population is astronomical, yet our state is handing out life sentences for nonviolent crimes. The California Three Strikes law is financial suicide. No other state in our Nation is foolish enough to compromise their budget in such a manner.

In California life sentences are being handed out for crimes without violence. I am talking about a life sentence of 25 years or more. Have our legislators lost their minds when they wrote this law? Why was this never explained to voters? Could it be the politicians' knew the voter would have rejected this outrageous law under these circumstances? I know this from personal experience: my own son is currently serving seventy years of incarceration rather than eight years for his crime. That is a death sentence for him as well as for me. About now you're asking yourself what did he do Murder someone, serial arson or rob a bank at gunpoint? No, there was no violence.

Jeremy, my son lights up my world just as most children do for their parents. He enjoyed Sunday school and was always helping out neighbors by carrying their groceries, taking out the trash or just listening to them.

**He has a heart of gold and loves to hand out hugs. This is my son.**



**Jeremy had attention deficit and staying focused wasn't as easy for him as it was for his big brother, Danny. In junior high he began "getting stoned". A counselor once described it as a way of self-medicating. Of course, as a mother I panicked and called our local church for help.**

**Life seemed good for a while, but then Jeremy entered High School and the problems started again. So I put Jeremy in a private school "Rescue Academy" for teenagers with learning disabilities and drug addiction. The cost was outrageous for a single mom. Still this was my child; I did what I could.**

**I had enough money to cover the first year at the private school and it was a financial hardship. The year came to an end I had to place Jeremy back in the public school system, a place not set up for struggling children. I requested a meeting known as Individualized Education Program or IEP with the school department to assist my son with his special needs.**

**I ask the district to apply the money for my son's education towards Rescue Academy rather than the public school system. The school district had the power to grant my request but yet it was denied. Jeremy relapsed and fell back into his old ways. It was only a matter of time that Jeremy dropped out of High School and began making poor decisions including stealing from his own family. The drugs had taken hold of my child. When you're on drugs your mind is not your own.**

**Danny, his brother, reported him to the sheriff's department for using his credit card without permission. Danny was hoping Jeremy would wake up and stop stealing and**



using. Months later Jeremy broke into a home while the family was out and took some odds and ends for quick money. Jeremy was arrested and received his first strike. He was incarcerated for 10 months. I hoped it would be a wakeup call to turn his life around.

After his release, he began seeing a young lady named Raechell and he was so happy. Life was good again or so it seemed. Jeremy started hanging out with his using buddies. One of these friends called him in the middle of the night for a ride when his car broke down. Jeremy ended up involved in another burglary scandal for stolen possessions. His friend had stolen items on him the night Jeremy gave him a ride. Jeremy swore that he had no knowledge of the property that had been stolen, but he was a convicted felon, with a previous robbery conviction. Jeremy acquired his second strike and served a little over a year. While Jeremy was in prison, his son David was born.

Upon his release Jeremy and Raechell moved into an apartment where all seemed well until Jeremy's work hours decreased. I don't know what was going through my son's head, but I know he started using crystal methamphetamine. Life can be so rough. Jeremy made some poor decisions and was arrested for entering two homes and taking jewelry.

Seventy years for taking jewelry worth less than price of an old car. In any other state Jeremy would have received 6-8 years. This is mad. Jeremy was given more time than a murderer or rapist. I could not believe what was happening right here in the United States of America. The punishment handed down is from medieval times. Wouldn't our Forefathers be ashamed! What about the Eighth Amendment, cruel and unusual punishment? No wonder California is going broke. These thoughts replay in my mind almost every night. I bet most Californians have no clue this is happening in our state. I know I didn't, until it happened to my family.

I believe in justice and paying back society for your crimes, but what happened next was just crazy. My young son of 25 years was arrested. The district attorney made no offers and Jeremy was forced to go to trial. The attorney I hired never prepared us for what was about to happen next. Jeremy was convicted October 2010. Judge David Gills of San Diego issued two strikes each for 25 years plus 10 years (X2) for breach of contract. The judge referred to it as "two nickels doubled up."



Shortly after Jeremy's most recent arrest my granddaughter Heatherly, was born. I still do not know how I will ever explain this situation to his

children? What do I say, "Your daddy's never coming home"? Jeremy has to do 85% of the 70 year term before he is eligible

for parole. That means in 59.5 years Jeremy might be released. In 59 years I will be 109 and Jeremy will be 86 years of age. Really, the state is willing to pay for my son to remain in custody until then? The current state cost of incarceration is over \$49,000 a year that comes to \$2,920,400 but let's round up to \$3 million to cover the unforeseen costs like elder care. I say this is financial suicide for California and my son is only one of the thousands which the state has chosen to lock up for life. Please - "Let the Time Fit the Crime".

I am constantly hearing about layoffs and financial hardship due to budget crunches. How about restricting the amount of time the courts can impose for nonviolent crimes, this would save Billions! The legislators need to get serious and amend this law. Our community needs to stick together and demand change.

California Three Strikes verses the budget this is where we stand today. Change this law and help our debt crisis, save thousands of jobs, repair our roads, give more grants for research & education and stop tuition hikes.



Elizabeth Stewart, one mother who knows the real costs  
To learn more go to [WWW.FACTS1.net](http://WWW.FACTS1.net)  
Families Amending California Three Strikes, FACTS  
This story can be found@ <http://fugitivemom.com/Mother.htm>

**Please join my fight to change this law. Write to your Legislators, Senators and the Governor. Write to the newspapers. Join Families to Amend California Three Strikes @ [www.FACTS1.net](http://www.FACTS1.net) and share my son's story with everyone you know.**