



# **Punishment and Democracy: Three Strikes and You're Out in California (Studies in Crime and Public Policy)**

*Franklin E. Zimring, Gordon Hawkins, Sam Kamin*

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"Getting tough on crime" has been one of the favorite rallying cries of American politicians in the last two decades, and "getting tough" on repeat offenders has been particularly popular. "Three strikes and you're out" laws, which effectively impose a 25-years-to-life sentence at the moment of a third felony conviction, have been passed in 26 states. California's version of the "three strikes" law, enacted in 1994, was broader and more severe than measures considered or passed in any other state.

*Punishment and Democracy* is the first examination of the actual impact this law has had. Franklin Zimring, Sam Kamin, and Gordon Hawkins look at the origins of the law in California, compare it to other crackdown laws, and analyze the data collected on crime rates in Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco in the year before and the two years after the law went into effect. They show that the "three strikes" law was a significant development in criminal justice policy making, not only at the state level, but also at the national level. They conclude with an examination of the trend toward populist initiatives driving penal policy.

The importance of the subject and the stature of the authors make this book required reading for policy analysts, criminal justice scholars, elected officials, and indeed any American seeking to know more about "get-tough" criminal sentencing.

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