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Measures to alter Prop. 47 held back in Assembly committee

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Two measures seeking to restore tough penalties for crimes that were downgraded to misdemeanors after Proposition 47 passed last year were shelved in the California Assembly on Thursday.

Both bills were introduced in response to the ballot initiative, passed last November, under which drug possession and other nonviolent crimes are no longer a felony.

That included downgrading theft of anything valued at \$950 or less. Critics charged that would make the punishment for stealing a gun, if it was below that value, too lenient.

Assemblywoman Melissa Melendez (R-Lake Elsinore) introduced AB 150 that would have amended the proposition to make theft of a firearm valued at \$950 or less a felony. The change would have required approval by the voters.

AB 46, by Assemblyman Tom Lackey (R-Palmdale), would have made it a felony to possess ketamine, GHB and other "club drugs" if the person had the intent of committing sexual assault.

Both bills were held back in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, a key fiscal panel. A similar "date rape drug" bill, SB 333 by Sen. Cathleen Galgiani (D-Stockton), passed the Senate Appropriations panel.

Assemblyman Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove) also introduced a measure in response to Proposition 47: a bill that would allow law enforcement to collect DNA samples from people convicted of certain crimes that the initiative had reduced to misdemeanors.

That bill passed the Assembly committee Thursday, but was scaled back to apply just to people who have been previously convicted of certain violent misdemeanors.