WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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URGENT ACTION ALERT

DATE: May 15, 2007

TO: Concerned Parties

FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

URGENT!

Bill likely to come to the House floor TOMORROW, Tues. 5/15/07!

NAACP Supports Passage of Comprehensive Ex-Offender Reentry Legislation

House Bill Would Help Prevent Recidivism

THE ISSUE:

Each year, more than 650,000 men and women are released from prison, which equates to roughly 1,700 individuals returning to our communities every day. This has a disparate effect on communities of color, since two-thirds of the people in prison are now racial and ethnic minorities. For African American males in their twenties, one in every eight is in prison or jail on any given day. These numbers are expected to grow, as more men and women are incarcerated each year and more complete their sentences.

For most ex-offenders, the transition back into their communities is difficult: many lack the necessary skills to successfully reenter into society. Studies have shown that many of those released from prison come back into society with a substance abuse addiction or mental health problem. Employment and housing are often difficult; one study found that applicants with criminal records experienced a 50% reduction in job offers for entry level jobs, compared to those without records. This was compounded by racial bias as African American former inmates experienced a 64% reduction in offers. As many as a quarter of all ex-offenders go to homeless shelters upon release. Furthermore, most communities where prisoners go upon release already struggle with high poverty, unemployment, fragile families and a dearth of jobs.

Over two-thirds of released prisoners are rearrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within three years and one-half of those rearrested were convicted and re-incarcerated. Not only does this recidivism cause tremendous problems for our communities, but it also places a huge burden on American taxpayers. The average cost of incarcerating each prisoner exceeds $22,600 per year; expenditures on corrections alone have increased from $9 billion in 1982 to $60 billion in 2002 and it continues to skyrocket out of control.

To combat this problem, Congressmen Danny Davis (IL) and others have introduced H.R. 1593 and Senator Biden (DE) and others have introduced S. 1060, the "***Second Chance Act: Community Safety through Recidivism Prevention***". The House bill has been approved of by the full House Judiciary Committee; **full floor consideration is expected on Tuesday, 5/15/2007**. Under this legislation states and local communities would receive federal assistance to establish ex-offender reentry projects, with enhanced focus on job training, housing, substance abuse and mental health treatment, as well as programs to work with the children and families of ex-offenders. In short, the *Second Chance Act* would encourage new community partnerships to help educate, train and employ those recently released who might otherwise return to a life of crime.

More…

THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:

Contact your Representative **and URGE THEM TO SUPPORT *THE SECOND CHANCE ACT*, H.R. 1593 WHEN IT COMES BEFORE THEM ON THE HOUSE FLOOR.** To contact your Representative, you may:

No time to use the US Mail! Call, write or send an e-mal TODAY!

✓ **Make a Phone Call**:

Call your Representative in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to his / her office. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write a letter to your Representative, send it to:

The Honorable (name of Representative)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

A SAMPLE LETTER IS ATTACHED

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Representative's office (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for his / her fax number (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Representative, go to www.house.gov, and click on "*Write Your Representative*." This will help you identify who your congressman is and how to contact him/her.

Unfortunately, not all Members of Congress have e-mail addresses.

THE MESSAGE

- More than 1,700 men and women re-enter our communities every day after a time in prison: many of them are unemployed and untrained, face serious substance abuse or mental health addictions, and are homeless.
- More than 2/3 of men and women released from prison were rearrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within 3 years.
- Recidivism is not only costly for the victims of crimes and communities, but also for the American taxpayer: The average cost of incarcerating each prisoner exceeds $22,600 per year; expenditures on corrections alone have increased from $9 billion in 1982 to $60 billion in 2002.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!

If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

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Sample Letter

(date)

The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: SUPPORT FOR THE "*SECOND CHANCE ACT: COMMUNITY SAFETY THROUGH RECIDIVISM PREVENTION*"

Dear Representative _____;

As your constituent, I urge you to support the legislation sponsored by Congressman Davis (IL), the "*Second Chance Act: Community Safety Through Recidivism Ac*t" (H.R. 1593) when it comes before you on the floor of the House. This much needed legislation is designed to allow states and local communities deal with the ever-increasing problem of assisting ex-offenders in reentering into society and becoming productive members of their communities.

More than 1,700 men and women re-enter our communities every day after a time in prison: many of them are unemployed and untrained, face serious substance abuse or mental health addictions, and are homeless. It is because of this lack of training, absence of employment and dearth of adequate housing and support that more than 2/3 of men and women released from prison were rearrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within 3 years.

Recidivism is not only costly for the victims of crimes and communities, but also for the American taxpayer: The average cost of incarcerating each prisoner exceeds $22,600 per year; expenditures on corrections alone have increased from $9 billion in 1982 to $60 billion in 2002. Thus, the money authorized in the *Second Chance Act* seems to be a good investment in our communities as well as in the men and women who have served their time in jail or prison.

Please support this legislation and help our communities help the men and women who have served their time, as well as their families. It is not only the morally right thing to do; it is also fiscally prudent. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future to let me know what you are doing to help reduce recidivism in our community, and what I can do to help.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and
remember to include your address)