



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

DATE: November 20, 2007
TO: Concerned Parties
FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

NAACP-SUPPORTED COMPREHENSIVE EX-OFFENDER REENTRY LEGISLATION IS PASSED BY THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES *BILL TO ASSIST EX-OFFENDERS RE-ENTERING OUR COMMUNITIES NOW MUST BE CONSIDERED BY THE US SENATE*

THE ISSUE:

On November 13, 2007, by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 347 yeas to 62 nays, the US House of Representatives passed H.R. 1593, the “*Second Chance Act of 2007*”. This bill is intended to help the more than 650,000 men and women who are released from prison each year re-enter society. Ex-prisoner re-entry has a disparate effect on communities of color, since two-thirds of the people currently in prison are 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.

For most ex-offenders, the transition back into their communities is difficult: many lack the necessary skills to successfully re-enter 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 is 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, many communities where prisoners go upon release already struggle with high poverty, unemployment, fragile families and a dearth of jobs. It should be no surprise, then, that over two-thirds of released prisoners are re-arrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within three years and one-half of those re-arrested are 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.

The “*Second Chance Act of 2007*”, which was introduced and has been championed by Congressman Danny Davis (IL) would provide state and local communities with 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.

Companion legislation, S. 1060, introduced by Senator Joe Biden (DE), must now be considered by the U.S. Senate. It has already been approved of by the Senate Judiciary Committee, and so we must put pressure on the full Senate to consider and pass this vital legislation.

THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:

Contact both your Senators and **URGE THEM TO SUPPORT AND CO-SPONSOR S. 1060, THE SECOND CHANCE ACT.** To contact your Senators you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

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

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:
The Honorable (name of Senator)
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

**A SAMPLE
LETTER IS
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to www.senate.gov; click on "*Find Your Senators*". Look up your Senators by state; go to their web sites for e-mail addresses.

REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!!!

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 Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: SUPPORT FOR S. 1060, THE “SECOND CHANCE ACT”

Dear Senator _____;

As your constituent, I urge you to support the legislation sponsored by Senator Biden (DE) the “*Second Chance Act*” (S. 1060) and to see that it comes up on the floor of the Senate, and is passed overwhelmingly, as swiftly as possible. 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. Not only does this legislation enjoy broad bi-partisan and bicameral support, but a companion bill (H.R. 1593) was passed by an overwhelming majority (347 yeas to 62 nays) in the U.S. House of Representatives on November 13, 2007.

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)

*Remember to contact
BOTH your Senators.*