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## ACTION ALERT

**DATE:** March 12, 2008  
**TO:** Concerned Parties  
**FROM:** Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau



### **NAACP-Supported Comprehensive Ex-Offender Reentry Legislation, already passed by the U.S. House, passes full U.S. Senate NAACP URGES PRESIDENT BUSH TO SIGN THE BILL**

#### **THE ISSUE:**

On March 11, 2008, the United States Senate passed, by a unanimous vote, H.R. 1593, the “*Second Chance Act of 2007*”. This was the same bill that the U.S. House of Representatives passed on Nov. 13, 2007, by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 347 yeas to 62 nays. The bill will now go to President Bush for his signature, after which it will become the law of the land.

*The Second Chance Act* 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 tirelessly by Congressman Danny Davis (IL) and Senators Joe Biden (DE), Sam Brownback (KS) and Patrick Leahy (VT) 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.

## **THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:**

Contact President Bush and encourage him to sign the *Second Chance Act* into law. To contact the President, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call The President at the White House comment line at (202) 456-1111(see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to President Bush, send it to:  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**A SAMPLE  
LETTER IS  
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, the White House fax number is (202) 456-2461 (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to the President, you can either go to the website ([www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)) or send an e-mail to [comments@whitehouse.gov](mailto:comments@whitehouse.gov)

## **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.
- ❖ The Second Chance Act will help millions of Americans who have paid their debt to society and served their sentence begin a fresh start.

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.

**MEMBERSHIP IS POWER! JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.**

To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit [www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org)

## Sample Letter

(date)

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

### **RE: SUPPORT FOR H.R. 1593, THE “*SECOND CHANCE ACT*”**

Dear President Bush;

I strongly urge you to sign H.R. 1593, the “*Second Chance Act*” into law when it is presented before you in the near future. This much needed legislation, which passed the Senate unanimously on March 11, 2008 and the House on November 13, 2007, by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 347 yeas to 62 nays, 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 sign it into law when it comes to your desk later this month 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.

Sincerely,

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