



Representative W. David Guice
North Carolina House of Representatives
District 113



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Media Release

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STATE LEADERS INTRODUCE NEW POLICIES TO REDUCE CRIME

Legislation Would Require All Offenders to be Supervised After Prison, Repeat B&E Offenders to Serve Longer Prison Terms, and Probationers to Complete Treatment or Face Jail Time

Raleigh, NC—After months of deliberation and discussion, leaders from North Carolina’s House of Representatives introduced legislation today that forces much closer supervision of offenders on probation and those released from prison, but doesn’t require any increase in state spending. The policies in the comprehensive criminal justice bill include new tools for probation officers to hold offenders accountable, longer sentences for individuals with repeat breaking and entering offenses, and increased funding for drug treatment programs in prison and in the community.

The new legislation is the product of research done over the last year in North Carolina by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, in partnership with the Pew Center on the States and the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, using a data-driven “justice reinvestment” approach.

According to House Majority Leader Paul Stam (R-Wake County): “Through the process of justice reinvestment we’ve been able to hone in on the best practices from around the country. Strategies like swift and certain sanctions when people on probation violate the conditions of their supervision reduce crime and thereby reduce the need for more prison beds.”

Currently more than 85% of individuals who leave North Carolina’s prisons are released with no supervision in the community. According to the bill’s primary sponsor, House Representative W. David Guice (R-Transylvania), himself a retired Chief Probation/Parole Officer, that’s unacceptable: “The most important time in preventing someone from reoffending is the first 9 months after release. With this legislation, approximately 15,000 people who would have walked out of prison with no accountability are now going to know we are watching and will hold them accountable for following the law.”

Representative Alice Bordsen (D-Alamance) expressed support for the policies and said: “We must ensure the public is safe. Despite the tough economic times we face, taxpayers expect no less. These

policies should generate enough savings to ensure that we provide oversight and services for returning inmates to take a productive role in their communities. Mental health services, drug-addiction services and job skills are the kind of treatment programs we know are critical to their successful reentry into their home communities.”

North Carolina’s prisons are over capacity, with 41,236 inmates on April 5, 2011 and projected growth of at least 10 percent in the next decade. Such growth could cost upwards of \$267 million in construction and operating expenses, all of which are avoided under the proposed legislation.

The proposed legislation addresses a number of existing shortfalls identified by the CSG Justice Center. Currently, North Carolina does not:

- Mandate supervision after release from prison
- Ensure swift and certain sanctions for violations of supervision
- Increase sentences for repeat B&E offenders until their fourth conviction
- Focus supervision & treatment on offenders that will benefit the most
- Provide second chance incentives for most first time felony drug offenders

Experts at the CSG Justice Center estimate that adopting the justice reinvestment legislation would not result in any new state spending. Instead, the policies are anticipated to reduce spending on corrections by up to \$293 million over the next six years. The legislation uses those savings to reinvest \$2.5 million annually in supervision, and \$7.5 million annually in expanded access to drug treatment both in prison and in the community.

Rep. Earline Parmon (D-Forsyth) said: “In the last 10 years our corrections spending has increased 68 percent to \$1.51 billion. While we are spending more and more money, we aren’t seeing better results in the community. By cutting back on prison costs, these measures free us up to invest in better supervision and treatment for those who need it, which gives people the best chance of success.”

Rep. John Faircloth, (R-Guilford) adds: “We recognize that something has to be done to make our communities safer. That requires new and innovative approaches to criminal justice,” said Faircloth. “The proposed policies are just the type of thoughtful solutions that put offenders in the right setting with evidence-based programs. We need to know that the people who are coming back to our communities have had the best chance to change their ways.”

Stakeholders throughout the state will watch as the bill moves through the legislative process, with its first hearing expected in April.

Representative W. David Guice
Legislative Office Building, Room 528
300 North Salisbury Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603
(919) 715-4466
David.Guice@ncleg.net

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The full report can be accessed:

http://justicereinvestment.org/states/north_carolina/pubmaps-nc

Contact: [Rep. W. David Guice](#)

919.715.4466