



November 14, 2007

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Full House Approves Second Chance Act Reentry Legislation

On November 13th, the full U.S. House of Representatives approved H.R. 1593, the Second Chance Act of 2007, by a 347 to 62 vote. There were 218 Democratic members and 129 Republican members voting for passage. Although the Second Chance Act has been introduced during the past two Congresses, this marks the first time that the legislation has received a vote before the full House. The Senate version of the Second Chance Act, S. 1060, was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee in August. The full Senate is expected to review the Second Chance Act before the end of the year.

The Second Chance Act, legislation that seeks to help States and localities better address the needs of individuals reentering the community from the criminal justice system, was introduced in the House in March by Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL), Chris Cannon (R-UT), John Conyers (D-MI), Howard Coble (R-NC), Bobby Scott (D-VA), Lamar Smith (R-TX), Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH), Randy Forbes (R-VA), Adam Schiff (D-CA), James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), Steve Chabot (R-OH), Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX), Elijah Cummings (D-MD), Hank Johnson (D-GA) and Yvette Clarke (D-NY). H.R. 1593 currently has 92 bi-partisan co-sponsors.

The Second Chance Act would reauthorize a Department of Justice (DOJ) grant program for people returning to the community from incarceration. H.R. 1593 would provide grants to States and local areas to create or strengthen the systems that help adults and youth transition into the community when they are released from incarceration by providing drug addiction and mental health treatment services, job training and education opportunities, housing and other necessary services. In order to receive grant funds, applicants would be required to provide an analysis and identification of regulatory and statutory barriers to an individual's reentry into the community. In addition, the legislation has a number of provisions requiring coordination between various agencies, including State substance abuse, child welfare, and criminal justice agencies. H.R. 1593 would authorize \$55 million in appropriations for these grants each year for the next two fiscal years.

New York

225 Varick Street, 4th Floor New York, New York 10014
Phone: 212-243-1313 Fax: 212-675-0286
E-mail: lacinfo@lac.org
Website: www.lac.org

Washington

236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE Suite 505 Washington, DC 20002
Phone: 202-544-5478 Fax: 202-544-5712
Email: lacinfo@lac-dc.org

H.R. 1593 would also authorize a number of other grant programs focused on strengthening drug and alcohol addiction treatment services for incarcerated and reentering individuals. In particular, H.R. 1593 would authorize:

- A grant program to State and local prosecutors to develop and implement qualified drug treatment programs as alternatives to incarceration for individuals convicted of non-violent offenses; \$10 million would be authorized for this program for each of the 2009 and 2010 fiscal years
- A Department of Justice (DOJ) grant program to States, localities and Indian tribes to improve the provision of drug addiction treatment to people incarcerated in prisons, jails and juvenile facilities; and to reduce the use of alcohol and other drugs by individuals with long-term addiction problems; \$15 million would be authorized for this program for each of the 2009 and 2010 fiscal years
- A grant program to States, localities and Indian tribes to 1) develop, implement or expand comprehensive family-based addiction treatment programs as alternatives to incarceration for parents convicted of non-violent offenses and 2) to provide prison-based family treatment programs for incarcerated parents; \$10 million would be authorized for this program for each of the 2009 and 2010 fiscal years
- A grant program through the Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice, in consultation with the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), to evaluate the effectiveness of depot naltrexone for the treatment of heroin addiction; \$5 million would be authorized for each of the 2009 and 2010 fiscal years

H.R. 1593 would also authorize a number of grant programs aimed at improving support for educational and job training and placement services for incarcerated and reentering people. H.R. 1593 would authorize:

- A grant program to nonprofit organizations through the Department of Labor aimed at helping formerly incarcerated people find and retain employment through mentoring, job training and placement services, and other comprehensive transitional services; the legislation states that grantees could coordinate efforts with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One-Stop system; \$20 million would be authorized for this grant program for each of the two 2009 and 2010 fiscal years
- A grant program to States, local governments, Indian tribes and other public and private entities to evaluate and implement methods to improve academic and vocational education for people in prison, jails and juvenile facilities; best practices for such educational programs would then be recommended to the Attorney General; \$5 million would be authorized for this program for each of two fiscal years
- A grant program to States, local units of government and Indian tribes to establish technology career training programs within prisons, jails and juvenile facilities; \$10 million would be authorized for this program for each of two fiscal years

In addition, H.R. 1593 would require the Attorney General, in coordination with the Director of the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), to establish a reentry program, subject to the availability of funding. Under the legislation, the BOP would be required to assess each individual at the beginning of their imprisonment to identify areas of need and to generate individual skills development plans to monitor skills enhancement. The BOP would also be required to help reentering individuals in obtaining identification cards, such as driver's licenses, prior to their release and to implement programs aimed at increasing the hiring of formerly incarcerated people by educating employers and the WIA one-stop system about existing incentives for hiring formerly incarcerated people.

It is unclear when the full Senate will vote on the Second Chance Act, but consideration may occur in the coming weeks. Congress is recessing on November 16th for the Thanksgiving holiday but is expected to return to session in the beginning of December for two to three weeks. The text and status of both the House and Senate versions of the Second Chance Act can be found at: <http://thomas.loc.gov>.