

# PEOPLE TALKING

## **“COUNTING THE COSTS”: PUBLIC SAFETY AND PRISONER RE-ENTRY**

Without the help of our diverse voices engaged in dialog about ending the revolving door of incarceration there will continue to be a lack of opportunity for reentry citizens.

### **THE ‘BIG PICTURE’ ...**

- 2 million Americans are incarcerated in US; 1 in every 100 persons is in the criminal justice system
- The United States incarcerates more than any other country in the world
- 95% of those incarcerated will be released
- The United States spends \$60 billion/yr. on corrections with a 70% rate of recidivism (return to prison)

### **IN NEW JERSEY...**

- New Jersey prison population has increased by 400% in less than three decades
- \$1.2 billion/yr. on corrections with a 67% re-arrested within 3 years of release (costing \$39k/inmate)
- The average person in NJ prisons functions at grade 6<sup>th</sup> reading level and grade 5<sup>th</sup> math level; only 2% of corrections budget is spent on educational programming
- \$331 million to incarcerate non-violent offenders
- NJ ranked 44/50 US States in a national report card for the number of barriers to successful reentry/reintegration

### **WHO IS IN NEW JERSEY’S PRISONS...**

- People of color comprise just 28% of the population but account for 83% of the prison population
- African-American/White Ratio in New Jersey prisons 12:1 (v. 6:1 Ratio Nationally)
- 50% are non-violent and New Jersey has the highest proportion of non-violent drug offenders in the nation
- 1/3 are diagnosed with a mental illness or chronic health conditions
- 42% of NJ prisoners are under the age of 30

### **OUR CURRENT POLICIES ARE NOT WORKING...**

- NJ taxpayers are seeing less money go toward our schools, hospitals, roads, and neighborhoods
- Public safety is not enhanced as incarceration is not reducing the risk that individuals will commit further crimes
- New Jersey taxpayers will continue to foot the bill for the damage that results from incarceration, lack of successful reentry, and recidivism —family services, welfare, unemployment, addiction treatment, etc.
- Given tough economic times, we simply cannot afford to prop up a failing criminal justice system—  
**We must do better and provide ex-offenders with opportunities for successful re-entry**

### **A YEAR OF MORE THAN 300 TESTIMONIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS...**

- Having paid their debt to society, the majority of people leave prison intending to be productive citizens—to work, pay taxes, and take care of their families
- There are currently insurmountable barriers to employment, reducing debt, educational opportunities, housing, health and social services, and supporting their families
- Women and children are disproportionately impacted by incarceration and require gender responsive and family-focused support
- Using time in prison productively enhances public safety and saves taxpayer dollars

***WE NEED YOU TO SUPPORT THE BILLS so that we can break the cycle of incarceration, enhance public safety, save taxpayer dollars, and break down the barriers to opportunities for successful reentry.***

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO: START TALKING**

- ***Spread the word:*** To friends, neighbors, family members, and elected officials in your community.
  - ***Ask your pastor if you can discuss/share the problems with your congregation***
  - ***Write letters to your local elected officials and tell them you want CHANGE and to support legislation***
- STATE SENATORS- Jennifer Beck and Sean Kean Assemblyman David Rible and Assemblywoman Mary Pat Angelini**

# PEOPLE TALKING

## HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL OFFICIALS

### **DISTRICT 11**

Townships: Allenhurst, Asbury Park, Atlantic Highlands, Avon-by-the-Sea, Belmar, Bradley Beach, Brielle, Deal, Eatontown, Highlands, Interlaken, Loch Arbour, Long Branch, Monmouth Beach, Neptune, Neptune City, Ocean, Rumson, Sea Bright, Sea Girt, Lake Como, Spring Lake, Spring Lake Heights, Wall, West Long Branch

### **DISTRICT 12**

Townships: Colts Neck, Englishtown, Fair Haven, Freehold Borough, Freehold Township, Little Silver, Manalapan, Marlboro, Millstone, Oceanport, Red Bank, Shrewsbury Borough, Shrewsbury Township, Tinton Falls

### **ELECTED OFFICIALS and LAW AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

#### **JENNIFER BECK SENATOR, D-12**

32 Monmouth Street, 3rd Floor, Red Bank 07701  
(732) 933-1591  
<http://beck.senatenj.com/>

#### **SEAN KEAN, SENATOR, D-11**

1955 Route 34, Building 2A, Wall Township 07719  
(732) 974-0400  
<http://www.seantkean.com>

#### **MARY PAT ANGELINI- ASSEMBLYWOMAN, D-11**

1955 Route 34, Building 2A, Wall Township 07719  
(732) 974-0400  
<http://www.marypatangelini.com/>

#### **DAVE RIBLE ASSEMBLYMAN, D-11**

1955 Highway 34, Bldg 2-A, Wall 07719  
(732) 974-0400  
<http://www.daverible.com>

**For more information about contacting your local elected officials:**

**Lori H. Eersolmaz | 732-530-2846 | [lorihope732@gmail.com](mailto:lorihope732@gmail.com)**

# re-entry issues

# re-entry bills

## **Strengthening Women and Families Act (A4197)**

- Lifts the ban on TANF, General Assistance, and food stamps for people with felony drug convictions
- Eliminates the prison phone surcharge
- Establishes a commission to strengthen bonds between incarcerated parents and their children
- Appoints an Assistant Commissioner for Incarcerated Women
- Prohibits transferring female inmates to male institutions
- Requires classification assignments to place inmates in facilities as close as possible to family
- Establishes the Division on Women as the semi-annual depository for all female inmate complaints

## **Post-Release Employment Act (A4198)**

- Creates a restricted use driver's license for getting to work, education, training, and medical visits
- Removes categorical employment bars for limousine services, places that serve alcohol, airports
- Bans the criminal background question 'box' on state, county, and municipal job applications
- Prohibits employers from discriminating against job applicants on the basis of a criminal record
- Requires employers to consider a returning citizen's certificate of rehabilitation

## **Administration of Correctional Facilities Act (A4199)**

- Increases the non-taxable amount accrued for inmate accounts
- Establishes the Department of the Public Advocate as the depository for all inmate complaints
- Requires ACA-based correctional officer training as requested by officers

## **Reduction of Recidivism Act (A4201)**

- Allows for a 90-day grace period for outstanding fines
- Provides returning inmates with photo ID, medical records, rap sheet, accounting of fines owed
- Eliminates the post-release Medicaid enrollment gap
- Establishes Mental Health Courts
- Establishes a Prisoner Reentry Commission
- Establishes a Blue Ribbon Panel for Review of Long-Term Prisoners' Parole Eligibility
- Mandates the use of community corrections for all those released from prison

## **Education and Rehabilitation Act (A4202)**

- Reviews vocational programs in order to meet demand job skills and standards
- Requires inmates to achieve 12th grade literacy with few exceptions
- Requires Department of Corrections to make GED classes available to all inmates who request
- Requires GED certificates to be issued by Department of Education
- Allows formerly incarcerated persons to visit any prison in the State for motivational purposes
- Caps parole 'hits' at three years before being given another hearing
- Allows inmates to enter into agreements for education and training that decreases parole terms

## **Criminal Penalties Act (A4203)**

- Provides discretion to courts to reduce accumulated fines and penalties
- Requires family impact statements on pre-sentencing reports
- Includes restorative justice mediation as an alternative sentence
- Expands access to expungement