

SUMMARY

REVIVE THE SYSTEM OF PAROLE FOR FEDERAL PRISONERS AND INCREASE GOOD TIME ALLOWANCES FOR FEDERAL OFFENDERS

Parole of federal offenders began after enactment of legislation on June 25, 1910. Under the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, the United States Parole Commission retained jurisdiction over defendants who committed their offenses prior to November 1, 1987. At the same time, the Act provided for the abolition of the Parole Commission on November 1, 1992. The phase out of the Commission has been extended by statute several times, most recently by S.1368: "The United States Parole Commission Extension and Sentencing Commission Authority Act of 2005," whereby the Commission has been extended until November 1, 2008. The Commission has taken over supervision of all DC offenders in addition to the remaining 4,000 or so Old Law offenders. Presently, the Commission has 85 employees and a budget of over \$10 million.

When the U. S. Sentencing Guidelines were imposed for federal defendants whose criminal activities took place subsequent to November 1, 1987, parole was eliminated. Early release was limited to approximately 47 days of good time each year and the sentences themselves were increased appreciably. The majority of federal inmates are non-violent low-level drug offenders with very long sentences. Moreover, the majority of this segment of the federal inmate population is being incarcerated for the first time. Several thousand people in prison are serving life sentences for non-violent offenses without the possibility of parole. The vast majority of these people are also first time offenders.

Ninety-seven per cent (97%) of all federal inmates are eventually released. Forty five thousand federal inmates were released last year in the United States. Presently, there are almost 191,000 federal detainees. The cost to house these inmates increases exponentially as they age. Total cost to U. S. taxpayers for federal incarceration is upwards of \$7.64 billion yearly. Re-entry of mostly indigent elderly inmates is significantly affecting state budgets. After many years of incarceration, inmates tend to lose all support. Their wives and children abandon them. They lose their ability to find and keep a job because they are banned from most jobs requiring a license and have received no alternative training in prison. There is no money allotted to the federal prison system for rehabilitation programs. Yet, voters favor rehabilitation over punishment 8 to 1.

Reinstitution of the old parole and good time laws would reduce the inmate population considerably. Those statues, with minor changes, would reward those inmates who have shown positive institutional behavior with earlier release. Although early release would not be guaranteed, it would allow a second chance to those that prove they deserve that chance. Supervision of all offenders would revert once again to an existing agency with the expertise to determine the appropriate time for return to the community without endangering the public safety.

It has been determined that this plan of parole and increased good time will save U. S. taxpayers upwards of \$2 billion per year by taking mainly non-violent first-offenders out of the prison system earlier and enabling them to become part of the productive mainstream of American life.

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