

GOOD TIME BILL

Americans inside US federal prisons have had no prospect of early release for decades thanks to the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984, which abolished federal parole. Since the early 1980's federal prisons have become increasingly crowded. No provision has been made to decrease the burden to the federal prison system and the expense to the American taxpayer, and there is no incentive for prisoners to work towards changing their behavior while they are incarcerated – no amount of rehabilitation or good behavior will, under the current rules, bring any of the over 200,000 people in the federal system home to be reunited with loved ones and community.

The estimated yearly cost to house one prisoner in the federal system is over \$40,000, and lengthy incarcerations are an increasing drain on the health of the US economy. The Federal Bureau of Prisons is more than forty percent over capacity, and prison overcrowding presents real dangers to prisoners as well as staff. Some facilities are one hundred percent above capacity, and there is no plan to relieve the strain on the system. The vast majority of people held in federal prisons are non-violent low-level drug offenders with very long sentences, and there is significant over-representation of people of color – forty percent of inmates are African-American and sixteen percent are Mexican citizens. Do we want to continue to dump money into an overburdened, dysfunctional federal system, or do we want to give people a second chance to be part of our communities?

A bill about to be re-introduced to Congress would reduce the sentences of people in federal prisons by increasing the “good time” credit all federal prisoners receive. This would apply to all federal prisoners except the ones serving life sentences. Re-establishing good time credit would save US tax-payers more than 2 billion dollars per year. Representative Danny Davis of Illinois introduced H.R. 7089 – the Federal Prison Work Incentive Act of 2008 – in the last session of Congress, and it is expected to be introduced again when Congress reconvenes. You can read the full text of the bill or download it as a PDF at <http://www.fedcure.org/information/HR7089.shtml>.

There is a good chance this bill will pass if it becomes a priority on the congressional agenda. Making this bill a priority for Congress will require a concerted push from all corners of the prison reform, political prisoner support, and progressive social justice communities nationwide.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Write, call, and email your Congressional Representatives! Urge them to reintroduce and then vote for this bill.

You can find out who your Congressional Representative is at www.house.gov or www.visi.com/juan/congress/index.html by typing in your address and zip code.

Calling is easy and effective. You'll speak to an aid briefly and they'll take down your name and your position. The bill is currently in the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives. If you have a representative on this committee (<http://judiciary.house.gov/about/members.html>), urge them to vote it out of committee and support it.

If you write, write your representative at the local (not DC) address, and inform them if you know and care about a federal prisoner. You can also bring up crowding issues and the economic drain federal prisons are on the health of the country. You can read more talking points on www.fedcure.org or by going to goodtimebill.info

Set up a meeting with your Congressional Representatives!

Especially if you have a loved one in federal prison or if you are part of a progressive organization with a stake in a better future for this country, make this issue real for your representative in the way it is real for you.

Become a point person for the Campaign to Support the Good Time Bill!

Download this info sheet, make copies, and distribute to everyone you know. Speak on this issue publicly and privately.

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