



**JOIN TOGETHER ONLINE**

to advance effective drug and alcohol policy, prevention, and treatment

## **Legislation Introduced to Aid Reentry of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals into the Community**

4/20/2005

### **Press Release**

Legal Action Center  
153 Waverly Place  
New York, NY 10014  
[www.lac.org](http://www.lac.org)

Washington, DC - The Legal Action Center today praised the introduction of the "Second Chance Act of 2005: Community Safety through Recidivism Prevention" as a historic moment in the history of criminal justice reform. The Second Chance Act will begin to reverse the decade long accumulation of unfair barriers that prevent people with criminal records from successfully joining the community after incarceration.

Introduced on Tuesday in the House of Representatives by Representatives Rob Portman (R-OH), Danny Davis (D-IL), Howard Coble (R-NC), Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH), Steve Chabot (R-OH), Chris Cannon (R-UT) and Katherine Harris (R-FL), H.R. 1704 also would provide grants to States and local areas to begin to address the need for drug and mental health treatment, job training and education opportunities, and housing for individuals when they return to the community.

Paul N. Samuels, President/Director of the Legal Action Center, hailed the legislation as a "critical first step towards reversing the archaic and counter-productive legal roadblocks that prevent successful reintegration of people with criminal records and improving the reentry process."

Important provisions in the legislation include:

- Modifying the ban on Federal financial aid for individuals with drug convictions by clarifying that only individuals who receive a drug conviction while enrolled will lose their eligibility for the specified period of time as opposed to the current interpretation that denies aid to individuals with past, as well as current, drug convictions.
- Providing support for the review of various Federal and State barriers that bar individuals with criminal records from having access to employment opportunities, welfare benefits and housing.
- Improving opportunities for residential substance abuse treatment and aftercare for individuals under the supervision of the State and Federal prison systems.

Alexa Eggleston, Director of National Policy, expressed the Center's strong support for the legislation, including the financial aid provision that would reinstate access to higher education for thousands of students across the country.

Ms. Eggleston stated "while the Legal Action Center will continue to support and fight for full repeal of the ban, this language is a step in the right direction." Ms. Eggleston added that, "the message that this legislation sends, that we care about people who are being released from prison and jail and want them to have access to jobs, treatment, education and housing so that they do not return to prison or jail, is extremely important. The legislation recognizes that helping people with criminal records successfully reenter society benefits not just them and their families, but all Americans by reducing crime, strengthening families and increasing productivity. This is a landmark piece of legislation that Congress should pass this year."

A bi-partisan Senate companion bill is expected to be introduced in the next few weeks.

*For more information, contact Alexa Eggleston at (202) 544-5478, x11 or Paul Samuels at (212) 243-1313.*