



JOHN R. KASICH

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KASICH SIGNS COMPREHENSIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM LEGISLATION

New Law Aims to Reduce Crime, Focuses on First-Time Non-Violent Offenders

COLUMBUS – Sweeping criminal justice sentencing reform legislation was signed into law today by Gov. John R. Kasich. The comprehensive reforms contained in House Bill 86 (Blessing, Heard) garnered broad bipartisan support in both legislative chambers, passing the Ohio House by a vote of 96-2 and the Ohio Senate by 30-3.

The new law aims to reduce crime by diverting first-time, non-violent offenders to intensive rehabilitative programming in a community setting, away from the corruptive influence of career criminals within the state's prison system. The law seeks to reduce incidents of prison violence, reduce over-crowding and prepare inmates for productive societal re-entry.

"I get emotional about this because I think the passage of this bill and the changing of this law is going to result in the saving of many, many lives, maybe even thousands, before all is said and done," said Kasich at today's press conference. "I think as we all know, the type of reform in this legislation has set idle for 25 years ... Nobody wanted to touch it ... You know what, when you're dealing with human beings ... if you're going to put your own future ahead of other people's lives and their ability to reclaim their lives, you're making a big mistake."

The new law:

- Diverts first time, non-violent offenders to community-based sanctions with appropriate rehabilitate programming;
- Equalizes penalties for crack and powder cocaine;
- Allows inmates to qualify for an eight percent term reduction based on successful completion of educational, vocational and mental health programming. This provision only applies to inmates who enter prison after the law is enacted. All sex offenders are excluded;
- Increases felony status for theft related crimes from \$500 to \$1,000;
- Permits the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections to petition for judicial release of inmates who have served 80 percent of their sentence, successfully completed rehabilitative programming and have no incidents of violence while incarcerated. Sex offenders, repeat violent offenders and those incarcerated for gun crimes are excluded; and,
- Fully funds community corrections based proper utilization of the Ohio Risk Assessment System available to all sentencing jurisdictions.

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