



UULMNJ

Criminal Justice Reform/End the New Jim Crow Task Force

Annual Report Summary, April 18, 2015

During the past year the Task Force has been increasingly involved in legislative advocacy as well as awareness of strong Congressional and community anti-racist and End the New Jim Crow activity. There has been a notable increase in the number and potency of bills introduced addressing aspects of mass incarceration in NJ. ‘Drug laws’ and the racial disproportion of arrests, convictions and incarceration in our State are among the worst in the nation.

Our forceful Task Force advocacy and lobbying activity played a recognized role in the success of two important bills –

Bail Reform Bill allowing for supervised release of many incarcerated for long periods awaiting trial on non-violent drug violations and unable to pay mandatory bail.

The ‘Opportunity to Compete Act’ (‘Ban the Box’). Forbids question on prior conviction record on initial employment applications and provides other ‘reentry’ employment rights.

Current activity is focused on a number of more active bills that can continue to make meaningful changes in the NJ criminal justice system.

The Isolated Confinement Restriction Act – sharply limits use of present torturous solitary confinement; prohibits use for juveniles and mentally ill.

The ‘Presumptive Parole’ Bill requires parole release of non-violent offenders at earliest eligible parole date; opens long term parole blockage and can measurably reduce NJ incarceration numbers.

Drug Abuse Treatment Bills – a package of 21 bills directed at improving aspects of drug rehab and treatment is a positive step compared to criminalization. The Task Force supports many of these including the recent advance of the MAT/Drug Court Bill permitting use of medically assisted treatment in prison and official programs.

The Task Force has been following a total of about 30 pieces of NJ legislation. These include bills addressing Juvenile Justice Reform, Criminal Record Expungement, Prison Telephone Surcharges, Ex-offender Enfranchisement – and reform of other reentry restrictions, and also Marijuana Decriminalization. This is legislation that could make real and significant changes and

affect many people's lives. Marijuana decriminalization, if properly enacted and implemented, could have a substantial impact on NJ incarceration levels.

In addition the Task Force supports and joins in stimulating advocacy, educational and protest programs in Congregations and for community outreach for criminal justice reform, an end to police and vigilante violence against people of color, and an end to the new jim crow.

For more information and a listing of current legislative activity contact Al Stawsky, Chair, at Alynways@gmail.com.