

## **LWVIL 2017 Issues Briefing: Criminal Justice:**

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### **Legislative overview in 2016:**

Good reform legislation targeted recidivism, reducing the prison population, and keeping people out of the criminal justice (CJ) system: employment barriers to people with records were eased or removed; judges are required to justify sentencing someone to prison for a low-level felony; defendants must be fully informed of the consequences of pleading guilty; some offenses have been decriminalized or reclassified to reduce sentences; returning citizens now have state-IDs, making reentry into society easier; supplemental (earned) sentence credit is liberalized, the prohibition on allowing the imposition of a probation sentence in certain drug-related cases has been lifted.

### **Specific legislation that the League supported with TFA and/or witness slips:**

**HB4360 (PA99-0667)** removes lifetime employment barriers in schools

**HB4515 (PA99-0872)** requires the Health Care Worker Registry to report if an individual, having received a waiver, is eligible for employment.

**HB5973 (PA99-0876)** reduces occupational and business licensing barriers so that people with records are eligible to engage in a number of professions.

**SB42 (PA99-0886)** allows health care professionals with a forcible felony conviction to apply to have their licenses restored following a wait period of 5 years since conviction or 3 years since completion of sentence.

**SB3005 (PA99-0884)** removes lifetime barriers to employment in Park Districts.

**SB2465** would have barred Illinois from seeking reimbursement for incarceration costs from returning citizens but the Governor's amendatory veto killed the bill

### **Looking ahead**

The **Final Report of the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Report** is now available and includes 27 recommendations. New recommendations include: Increase rehabilitative service and treatment capacity in high-need communities; implement a Gender-Responsive Approach for female offenders; require periodic training on recognizing implicit racial and ethnic bias for those working in the CJ system; collect and report data on race and ethnicity at every point in the CJ system to allow a systematic assessment of disproportionate minority impact; reclassification of certain felonies; allow inmates to serve a lower percentage of their sentences than is required now; restore the Halfway Back program as an alternative to incarceration for violations of Mandatory Supervised Release.

Just as the Governor's Commission rethought the punitive response to criminal behavior, so also is the need to rethink violence. **The LWVIL and the Chicago League have endorsed a report** issued by The Children and Family Justice Center at the Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law entitled **Building a Safe Chicago: Calling for a Comprehensive Plan**, urging Chicago's elected leaders to reject reactionary and unproven crime fighting policies and instead attack the root causes of violence with a comprehensive crime prevention plan that will put public health first, reduce illegal handgun availability, tailor punishment to the crime, ensure police effectiveness, and invest to achieve equity.

**Illinois has been selected** to participate in the National Criminal Justice Reform Project according to Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority Executive Director John Maki. "This partnership will be invaluable as Illinois works to fully integrate evidence-based practices that ensure a fair and cost-effective criminal justice system and improve public safety."

As offenders are diverted from incarceration, the State will be able to continue to "right" size the juvenile detention centers, thus making available more funding for positive and effective services and programs.