

CLEAR Initiative

Criminal Law Edit, Alignment and Reform

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CLEAR COMMISSION REVIEW OF ILLINOIS CRIMINAL CODE STEPS CLOSER TO COMPLETION

Gov. Quinn signs bill reducing complexity and length of Illinois Criminal Code

SPRINGFIELD, IL -- A multi-year effort to make the lengthy Illinois Criminal Code less complex, easier to comprehend and error-free is 90 percent complete.

Gov. Pat Quinn on Thursday signed Senate Bill 1310, which rewrites Criminal Code articles covering sex offenses, bodily harm offenses and deception and fraud.

SB 1310 is the product of the Criminal Law Edit, Alignment and Reform (CLEAR) Commission, which is composed of legislators, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, law enforcement representatives and other experts in the criminal justice system. The CLEAR Commission is co-chaired by former Gov. James R. Thompson and former Illinois Appellate Court Justice Gino L. DiVito.

"This is the first comprehensive review of the Illinois Criminal Code since 1961," Thompson said. "The intervening 50 years have brought thousands of changes through legislation and court decisions, and many of them brought confusion and costly court battles. When finished, this bi-partisan rewrite will make the code not just easier to understand but also consistent and just."

The rewrite eliminates redundant language added to the Criminal Code over several years and consolidates some existing criminal offenses previously spread through separate sections of the code. It also incorporates case law into various statutory provisions, so that the law is a comprehensive statement of what a lawyer, judge, defendant or victim needs to know about the offense.

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SB 1310 passed in the 2009-2010 legislative session and was sponsored by Sen. Kirk Dillard, R-Hinsdale, and Senate President John Cullerton, D-Chicago. House sponsors were Reps. Lou Lang, D-Skokie; Jim Durkin, R-Western Springs; Jack Franks, D-Woodstock; and Dennis Reboletti, R-Elmhurst.

"When we finish reviewing and editing every page, the length of the Illinois Criminal Code will have been cut by about one-third, but CLEAR is about much more than just slimming and reorganizing," DiVito said. "Lawmakers, legal scholars and courthouse veterans have volunteered hundreds of hours to study, debate and agree on changes that will make our court system more fair and better understood by all."

The work of the CLEAR Commission, which was formed in 2004, was accomplished with technical assistance provided by The Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States and the Vera Institute of Justice. Financial and in-kind support was provided by the Bank One Foundation; the Chicago Bar Foundation; the Field Foundation; David Heller, Illinois Bar Foundation; the JEHT Foundation; the Joyce Foundation; Mayer Brown LLP; the New Prospect Foundation; Pew Charitable Trusts; the Rokit Fund, the Steans Family Foundation; the University of Chicago Law School; the Wieboldt Foundation; Winston & Strawn LLP; and the Woods Fund of Chicago.

The CLEAR Initiative was developed by staff at Metropolis Strategies, the successor to Chicago Metropolis 2020, a business-based civic organization promoting long-term planning and smart investment in the Chicago region and working for better outcomes in our legal and corrections systems. The Commission staff was led by Directors Peter Baroni, Kathy Saltmarsh and Jean Templeton.

For more information about the CLEAR Commission, visit www.clearinitiative.org.

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