

CLEAR Initiative

Criminal Law Edit, Alignment and Reform

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GOVERNOR SIGNS CLEAR COMMISSION LEGISLATION TO REDUCE COMPLEXITY OF CRIMINAL CODE

New council created to advise on sentencing laws and improve efficiency and management of criminal justice system

CHICAGO – Gov. Pat Quinn on Tuesday signed a package of bills reducing the complexity and length of the Illinois Criminal Code and creating an advisory body to conduct comprehensive analyses of state sentencing laws and the impact sentencing changes would have on the criminal justice system.

The trio of bills is the most recent 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. Earlier this year, Gov. Quinn signed legislation implementing the CLEAR Commission's recommendations to make the Illinois Code of Corrections easier to understand without altering the severity of punishment for crimes.

The CLEAR bills signed by Gov. Quinn include **Senate Bill 1300** and **Senate Bill 1325**, which together rewrite about one-quarter of the Illinois Criminal Code. The editing process removed redundancies, replaced unconstitutional sections, clarified ambiguities and reordered the statutes to make them more understandable to practitioners and the public. The recommendations of the CLEAR Commission for the remainder of the criminal code rewrite will be addressed in upcoming sessions. When finished, the Illinois Criminal Code is expected to be reduced in size by one-third.

The third bill, **Senate Bill 1320**, creates the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council, an 18-member council to be housed in the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

“This new council will help policy makers get a better understanding of the current criminal justice system and make recommendations to increase public safety and make the system more efficient and effective for everyone involved,” said former Illinois Appellate Court Justice Gino L. DiVito, who co-chairs the CLEAR Commission.

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“There is no shortage of ideas about how to change the system, but too often the impact of proposed changes is not well understood,” said former Gov. James R. Thompson, co-chair of the CLEAR Commission. “When policy changes are being debated, the public and their elected representatives now will have a place to go for solid, non-partisan information, including evaluation of changes in other states, prison population projections, and the latest research in the field.”

The three bills were sponsored by Senate President John Cullerton, D-Chicago, and Sens. Kirk Dillard, R-Hinsdale, and John Millner, R-Schaumburg. House sponsors were Reps. Arthur L. Turner, D-Chicago; Dennis Reboletti, R-Elmhurst; Constance Howard, D-Chicago; Jim Durkin, R-Western Springs; and John Fritchey, D-Chicago.

The work of the CLEAR Commission leading to this legislation 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 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.

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

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