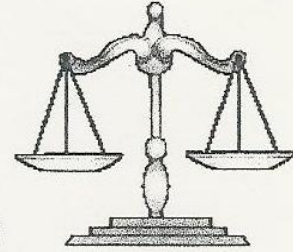


JRC

Justice Reform Consortium



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2014 Iowa Legislative Session is History

The headline may indicate that the most recent legislative session of Iowa's General Assembly is "historic". In our opinion, it's not. But it is history.

How did we do?

Last December, we posted a list of our priorities for the 2014 Iowa Legislative Session. Now that the session is over, we can reflect back upon the accomplishments and disappointments.

JRC aimed to **Amend the Iowa Code** to reflect the changes the Courts have made to juvenile sentencing in class "A" felonies. Since no legislation passed that addressed this issue, you might consider our efforts as a disappointment. However, that's not the case. The position of so many opposing lobbying organizations was to pass draconian measures that would have made law that we consider to be constitutionally questionable. In that respect, we can go forward next year with more hope of getting legislation enacted that takes the emotion and politics out of the equation.

We suggested a sentencing scheme in Iowa that would include a post-incarceration time of supervision to replace the **Kathlynn's Hope Proposal**, which would call for "a new one-strike life without parole penalty for sexual predators who commit the most heinous violent sex crimes against children, lifetime GPS monitoring for those convicted of felony sex crimes against children, [and the collection of] online identifiers from person on the Iowa sex offender registry." That idea was never taken seriously by any legislator. The concept we suggested was bounced around, but in the end, there was no consensus or compromise.

We maintain the belief that a combination of incarceration and mandatory supervision for a specific period of time upon release are more sensible options for protecting Iowa's public, especially children.

Enhanced Penalties & New Crimes: JRC always works to prevent the passage of bills that enhance current criminal penalties and create new crimes without some sort of empirical

evidence¹ to demonstrate that the enhancement or creation of the law is the only alternative to addressing a criminal matter, and that all alternatives have been exhausted. Unlike so many previous sessions, this issue was not a serious factor throughout the session. Perhaps our message is making an impression?

Sexual misconduct by a correctional officer or others – Sexual misconduct committed by employees and agents of the department of corrections and judicial district departments of correctional services is a serious offense. JRC has supported this effort in the past because it is an exception to the previous issue. In prison, there is no such thing as consensual sex between an inmate and an employee, vendor, volunteer, or other person. There was no action taken on this matter.

Restraints on pregnant prisoners –This was a huge disappointment this year. After the previous year's controversy using a political maneuver², the bill stalled. Numerous representatives of several stakeholder groups worked on the bill to shape it into a piece of legislation that would require the Department of Corrections to make rules regarding the process of transporting pregnant inmates. [Senate File 2190](#) passed the Senate 49-0 on February 24. The bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee on the following day. The Chair failed to even consider appointing a subcommittee to the bill.

Mandatory minimums – JRC will always support legislation that will eliminate mandatory minimum sentencing. Unfortunately, there was no significant movement this year. But legislators and other key officials are talking. Its time will come.

For more information, the non-partisan Legislative Services Agency – Fiscal Division – has produced an end-of-the-session publication that contains a plethora of information on appropriation bills and other legislation with a monetary impact on Iowa's budget.

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/FU/26068.pdf>



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¹ JRC's position on sexual misconduct by a correctional officer or others meets this criteria.

² Former State Senator Kent Sorenson introduced an amendment to the bill that would have changed the content of the bill from that of restraints to abortion.

Selected links:

I've served 15 years of my life sentence for a drug crime. Can I go home now?

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/05/life-sentence-drug-crime-clemency-non-violent-offenders> [Sharanda Jones](#) *The Guardian*. May 5, 2014

Federal Judge Strikes Down Wisconsin Law Requiring Photo ID at Polls.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/30/us/federal-judge-strikes-down-wisconsin-law-requiring-photo-id-at-polls.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&r=0> By [MONICA DAVEY](#) and STEVEN YACCINO APRIL 29, 2014 *New York Times*.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

[**Voices to be Heard**](#) is a support group for families and children of an incarcerated loved one. The group gathers to support and comfort those who know too well the grief that comes to those left behind when someone they love is incarcerated. The group meets on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at Union Park Methodist Church (East 12th & Guthrie in Des Moines) from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. The group brings in speakers, performs outreach, provide support groups and leadership classes. It is a good idea to contact Melissa ahead of time because the group provides dinner and a head count is preferred. Contact Melissa at 515/229-2645 for more information.

The next [**Friends of Iowa Women Prisoners**](#) meeting is at noon on **Tues., May 20th** at Wesley United Methodist Church, 800 East 12th.

MISSION: To bring together and inform individuals and groups concerned about women in the Iowa correctional system and to act on their behalf.

FIWP Mailing Address: Post Office Box 71272, Clive, IA 50325

In June, Marty Ryan and Stephanie Fawkes-Lee, legislative advocates for Justice Reform Consortium will be reviewing the past session and explaining how attendees could help bring attention to the issues that did not pass, for example, the restraints bill. Election years usually provide opportunities to educate both legislators and the general public on criminal justice reform issues.

Our July presenter is Renee Schulte, former Iowa legislator and mental health therapist. She spear-headed the passage of mental health and disability services (MHDS) redesign in 2011-2012. Currently, Renee has a unique opportunity to consult with the Mental Health Division of the Iowa Department of Human Services to implement the reform policy. Her work on MHDS reform won nine awards including the Iowa Mental Health Counselor Association award for bipartisan leadership 2012, the Gold Star Award from Iowa Sheriff's and Deputies Association 2012, and the Iowa Hospital Association Legislator of the Year 2012.

Renee is the owner of Schulte Consulting LLC, which offers strategic planning in mental health, healthcare, legislative process and environment. She is married to Brent, the discipleship pastor at Antioch Christian Church, and lives in Cedar Rapids.

Bring your lunch. The place and time are consistent throughout the year. The meetings are always held on the third Tuesday of the month, and always held from noon to 1:00 pm at Wesley United Methodist Church located at 800 East 12th Street in Des Moines. The location is a block west of East High School. Please contact [**Vi**](#) for more information.

Justice Reform Consortium member organizations: Iowa CURE & Iowa Coalition 4 Juvenile Justice; Friends of Iowa Women Prisoners; Trinity United Methodist Church; Methodist Federation for Social Action; Voices to be Heard; ACLU of Iowa; Social Action Committee, Des Moines Presbytery; Des Moines Chapter of WILPF; American Friends Service Committee; Plymouth Congregational Church, Board of Christian Social Action; Iowa Annual Conference, UMC; Iowa NOW and Des Moines NOW; National Association of Social Workers; Beacon of Life; Citizens for Undoing Racism-War on Drugs Task Force.

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Fawkes-Lee & Ryan, Public Policy Advocates <http://iowappa.com/>

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