

HIRE on the Hill

Second Chance Act Continues to Gain Support; Congressional Staff Members Optimistic about Legislation's Chances for Passage Despite Packed Agenda

The Second Chance Act continues to garner support in the 109th Congress. The legislation, H.R. 1704 in the House and S. 1934 in the Senate, currently has 106 House co-sponsors and 17 Senate sponsors. Although time remains tight in the legislative calendar, limiting the opportunities for passage of the bill, Congressional staff has indicated that they remain optimistic that the Second Chance Act could be approved before the end of the current legislative session. Movement on the bill has been delayed several times because of competing priorities in Congress, including budget cuts, hurricane relief efforts and, more recently, immigration reform. In addition, several members of Congress remain concerned about the cost of bill and whether prisoner reentry is an issue that the federal government should address.

Introduced in the House in April of 2005, the Second Chance Act would provide demonstration grants to States, local areas, and non-profits to begin to address the need for alcohol and drug addiction and mental health treatment, job training and education opportunities, housing and a range of other services for individuals and their families following a period of incarceration and upon their return to the community.

Approved by the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security in February, H.R. 1704 awaits review by the full House Judiciary Committee which could occur this spring. The Senate Judiciary Committee has yet to conduct a hearing on S. 1934; however, the Committee's Chairman, Arlen Specter (R-PA), is one of the legislation's chief Senate sponsors, and has expressed his strong support for moving the legislation forward as soon as possible. The text and status of both H.R. 1704 and S. 1934 can be found at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.
