

MEDIA ALERT:

Second Chance Day on the Hill Gathers Supporters of Justice Reform at State Capitol January 26, 2011

For More Information Contact:

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WHO: Minnesota Second Chance Coalition

Press Conference Speakers Include:

Former Governor Al Quie; Senator Doug Magnus; Senator John Harrington; Ramsey County District Court Judge Gary Bastian; CEO of Twin Cities Rise Arthur Berman; and Chief Operating Officer of 180 Degrees, Inc. Sarah Walker

Rally Speakers Include:

Former Governor Al Quie; Ramsey County Sheriff Matt Bostrom; Reverend Ron Smith; and CEO of Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota Michael Wirth-Davis.

Legislators Speaking:

Senator Doug Magnus; State Rep. Tom Rukavina; Senator John Harrington; Senator Limmer; Senator Junbauer; Senator Ortman; Representative Gruenhagen

WHAT: Second Chance Day on the Hill Press Conference and Capitol Rotunda Rally

WHEN: Wednesday, January 26th, 2011
9:00 a.m. Press Conference
10:00 a.m. Rally

WHERE: Room 125, State Capitol (9 a.m. Press Conference)
Minnesota State Capitol Rotunda (10 a.m. Rally)

WHY: **St. Paul, MN (January 26, 2011)** – Hundreds of ex-offenders, their families and supporters of justice reform are expected to gather on Wednesday, January 26, 2011, at 10 a.m. in the State Capitol Rotunda to highlight the importance of second chances for individuals with criminal histories. The effort is led by the [Minnesota Second Chance Coalition](#), a non-partisan consortium of more than 50 nonprofits and companies working to raise statewide and national awareness regarding the barriers facing individuals with criminal records. These barriers affect the social, civic and economic stability of families and entire communities. According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, when ex-offenders can find and keep employment, they are more likely to be able to support their children and avoid crime.

Representative Bob Gunther, chairman of the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee is supportive of an expansion of the “Ban the Box” initiative which was first signed into law by Governor Tim Pawlenty in 2009. Minnesota was one of the first states in the country to require public employers to remove questions about criminal history from employment applications, or “ban the box.” Since then several states have agreed with the need for this policy reform and passed similar legislation.

This session’s proposed expansion would not limit ultimate access to criminal record or credit history but would eliminate discrimination and confusion based only upon initial application information. Such a bill reinforces the idea that our communities are safer and stronger when everyone has more employment opportunities – and this will provide Minnesota employers the opportunity to consider entire applicant pools, rather than losing qualified candidates based on “a box.”

QUOTE: Ramsey County District Court Judge George T. Stephenson summed up the spirit of the day when he said, “Most folks in our courts are placed on probation and do NOT go to prison. They are our brothers and daughters, our friends and neighbors. We all need to work together to help them return to our communities as law-abiding, contributing members.”

MN Second Chance Coalition founder, Sarah Walker, COO of 180 Degrees, Inc., said, “I see unique opportunities for bi-partisan cooperation on issues related to criminal justice reform as both sides of the aisle look for areas to reduce expenditures. It costs the state nearly \$35,000 each year to incarcerate an adult male. In MN, over 60% of individuals will return to prison within 3 years – most often for technical violations - if we can prevent individuals from returning by reducing barriers to employment the state will save money.”

To learn more about attending Second Chance Day on the Hill or for information about the Coalition and its members, visit www.mnsecondchancecoalition.org or follow them on Facebook by joining the “MN Second Chance Coalition” group.