

Resolution Helps Former Inmates Live Out Their God-Given Potential

The U.S. Senate has passed a resolution declaring April 2018 “Second Chance Month,” continuing Prison Fellowship’s national effort to reduce barriers that keep formerly incarcerated Americans from successfully rejoining society.

The resolution “calls on the people of the United States to observe Second Chance Month through actions and programs that promote awareness of collateral consequences; and provide closure for individuals who have paid their debts.”

On March 30, 2018, President Donald J. Trump proclaimed the month of April as Second Chance Month to raise awareness of how we can create second chances that will benefit the more than 65 million men and women with a criminal record.

Prison Fellowship, joined by a bipartisan coalition of more than 150 organizations, is seeking to reduce the social stigma and barriers that plague Americans with a criminal record—one in four adults—who are trying to re-enter society and become contributing members of their communities.

“There is no such thing as a throwaway person, and by granting second chances to those who have earned them, we will be contributing to the restoration of families, communities and our nation,” said Craig DeRoche, senior vice president, advocacy and public policy for Prison Fellowship. “We are honored that Senators Rob Portman and Amy Klobuchar introduced this bipartisan legislation designating April 2018 as Second Chance Month. Together, we are working to remove unnecessary barriers that prevent those with a criminal record from becoming productive members of society.

"We believe people with a past can rise from their failure, repay their debts and that healing is possible for our communities affected by crime."

"An estimated 65 million Americans have a criminal record, and 95 percent of current inmates are set to be released one day, two-thirds of whom will be released in the next five years. Sadly, too many Americans who serve their time become caught up in a cycle of crime," said Senator Rob Portman, Ohio. "The Second Chance Act has helped to break that cycle by providing drug treatment and job training, and that makes our community safer, saves taxpayer dollars, and most importantly, helps former inmates live out their God-given potential."

"The mistakes of our past don't have to define the potential for our future. By designating April as Second Chance Month, we are supporting those who are returning from prison and want a fair shot at living an honest and productive life by increasing public awareness and getting them the help they need. I will continue my bipartisan efforts to renew and strengthen this critical law."

For far too many who have served time behind bars, release from incarceration brings a new kind of prison. Some 65 million Americans have a criminal record. This limits their access to jobs, education, housing and other things necessary for a full and productive life. Any hope and new identity found while incarcerated can be quickly lost upon release when faced with the "second prison"—the more than 48,000 documented social stigmas and legal restrictions that inhibit opportunities to rebuild someone's life after paying a debt to society.

Co-sponsors of the bill include Portman, Ohio; Klobuchar, Minn.; James Lankford, Okla.; and Richard Durbin, Ill. {eoal}