

Rep. Crowley: African American State Representatives call for representation on new task force

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Contact:

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Letter to Speaker Vos from African American State Representatives:

Dear Speaker Vos,

The undersigned African American members of the Wisconsin State Legislature formally request proper representation on the task force that will be looking at the possibility of building a new Wisconsin prison.

The prison population in Wisconsin has more than tripled since 1990, fueled by increased government funding for drug enforcement rather than treatment, three-strike rules, mandatory minimum sentence laws, truth-in-sentencing replacing judicial discretion in setting punishments, and concentrated policing in minority communities.

Particularly impacted in this time frame have been African American males. The 2010 U.S. Census showed Wisconsin having the highest black male incarceration rate in the nation. In Milwaukee County over half of African American men in their 30s have served time in state prison. This same study showed that one in eight, or 12.8% of African American working age men have been behind bars in state prisons and local jails. This rate of mass incarceration is the highest for African American men in the country and nearly double the national average of 6.7%.

Given the high level of racial inequality that is found in the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, it is imperative that any task force created to study the feasibility or necessity of new prisons being built have African American representation. Any and all of the four African American State Representatives that have authored and signed this letter would be ready and willing to serve on the task force if given the opportunity.

In order to ensure the legitimacy and integrity of this task force, it is essential that African Americans have representation. Please reconsider your nominations to add one of our communities elected representatives.

Respectfully,

Rep. Crowley, Rep. Bowen, Rep. Fields, Rep. Young