

Senate approves five crime bills

Posted on Tuesday, Nov 7, 2017

The state Senate approved five bills today that backers said would help crack down on violent offenders and protect those who have been victimized by criminals undeterred by past punishments.

Sen. Leah Vukmir, R-Wauwatosa and sponsor of the bills approved today, said there has been decreased accountability in the criminal justice, arguing lawmakers must acknowledge some offenders will not alter their behavior, particularly those who commit violent crimes.

"I've said it before. Enough is enough," said Vukmir, who is running for the U.S. Senate.

But Sen. Lena Taylor, D-Milwaukee countered other states are engaging in best practices to address the root of criminal behavior. Instead, the bills before the Senate seeks to up punishments without looking at the cause and sending more juveniles to the state's troubled youth prisons without fixing the issues there.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

"Our community corrections system is broken," Taylor said. "We send people out without housing, without skills, without a job, without any connections in order to go forward."

The bills the Senate approved today include:

*SB 52, which would remove the three-year limit on how long someone can be placed in a Type 1 juvenile correction facility or a secured residence care center for children and youth for committing certain offenses. Anyone 14 or older who commits a crime punishable by life imprisonment if committed by an adult can be in the Serious Juvenile Offender Program until they reach age 25. The bill would not change that. The bill was approved on a voice vote, though Dems expressed

concerns the cost of the change could reach the millions.

*SB 53 would change the process for expunging from someone's record a crime they committed while under the age of 25. Now, a court can order at the time of sentencing that the record be expunged upon successful completion of the sentence. Instead, the offender would have to wait at least one year after completing their sentence to petition a court to expunge it. The court would be required to deny the request under certain conditions, including if the person was convicted of another crime. The bill, approved 30-2, also would require reasonable attempts to notify crime victims of an expungement petition.

*SB 54 would require the Department of Corrections to recommend revoking extended supervision, parole or probation for anyone charged with a crime while on any of the three. Dems warned the costs could balloon to \$150 million a year. Vukmir said the bill would not require revocation, but send it back to a judge to consider, and Republicans said the true cost was undetermined. The bill cleared the Senate 21-12.

*SB 55 would increase the mandatory minimum sentence to five years for for murder, second-degree homicide and other repeat violent offenses. The minimum is now three years, six months. The Department of Corrections found as of Dec. 31, 2016, there were eight inmates who would ben subject to the mandatory minimum sentences in the bill. If approved, DOC projected it would have to contract for beds to handle additional inmates, though costs would be \$50,000 starting in the fifth year the proposal would be in place. It was approved 20-13.

*SB 56 would add a mandatory minimum sentence of three years for someone who violates a condition of their probation, parole or extended supervision for a felony or violent misdemeanor that they not possess a gun. It was approved 29-4.

Vukmir and state Rep. Joe Sanfelippo, R-Wauwatosa, unveiled the crime package earlier this year. But some bills in the original package were not taken up today. That includes legislation that sought to expand the offenses for which someone could be sent to state's juvenile prisons. Another to create a specific felony for carjacking passed the Senate in June.