

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Major criminal justice reform legislation cosponsored by Sen. Baldwin passes Senate

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*Baldwin: "An important step in the right direction to keep our communities safe and make the criminal justice system more just and fair."*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin voted in favor of the bipartisan criminal justice reform bill that passed the Senate this week with overwhelming support (87-12). The legislation cosponsored by Senator Baldwin, the *First Step Act*, includes reforms to America's prison and sentencing system to reduce recidivism, save taxpayer dollars and promote safe communities.

"This bipartisan legislation is an important step in the right direction to keep our communities safe and make the criminal justice system more just and fair," **said Senator Baldwin.** "The *First Step Act* reforms sentencing for nonviolent offenders and will help lower recidivism rates. People who have made mistakes and paid their debt to society deserve a chance to move forward and live a productive life. While there is much more work to be done, this bipartisan legislation will help move us in the right direction and I'm proud to join a broad coalition of supporters who have worked to get the job done on this legislation."

The *First Step Act* was introduced by Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL),

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA), and Senators Mike Lee (R-UT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). The bipartisan legislation uses evidence-based recidivism reduction programs to help inmates successfully return to society after serving their sentence. It also reduces some sentences for certain low-level, nonviolent offenders while preserving important law enforcement tools to tackle criminal enterprises.

The bill aims to reduce crime by helping low-risk inmates prepare to successfully rejoin society through participation in proven recidivism reduction programs. It also improves fairness in prison sentences by recalibrating certain mandatory minimum sentences while expanding their application to new categories of violent felons. The bill grants greater discretion to judges in sentencing of low-level, nonviolent drug offenders who cooperate with law enforcement. It also clarifies congressional intent on sentencing enhancements for certain crimes involving firearms. The *First Step Act* preserves the maximum potential sentences for violent and career criminals. Finally, the legislation allows petitions for retroactive application of the *Fair Sentencing Act* to be considered on an individual basis to reduce sentence disparities between crack and powder cocaine offenses. Under this legislation, any savings generated by the reforms are automatically reinvested into law enforcement programs to further reduce crime and improve community safety.

The *First Step Act* includes safeguards that prevent career and violent criminals from receiving earned time credits toward pre-release custody following completion of recidivism reduction programs. Under the bill, each inmate is evaluated using a data-driven risk and needs assessment tool to determine their likelihood of reoffending upon release. Only inmates found to be a low or minimum risk may benefit from earned time credits. Conviction for a number of serious offenses also disqualify inmates from earning time credits.

The *First Step Act* is modeled after state-based reforms that have proven to reduce crime, prison populations and taxpayer expenses. It is endorsed by President Trump and [cosponsored](#) by more than a third of the Senate, evenly balanced among Democrats and Republicans.

The *First Step Act* is backed by a number of law enforcement groups, including the [nation's largest police group](#). It's also [supported by 172 former federal prosecutors](#) including two former Republican U.S. attorneys general, two former deputy attorneys general and a former director of the FBI along with [sheriffs from 34 states](#) across the country. The National Governor's Association, which represents

the governors of all 50 states, [praised the bill](#). A broad coalition of conservative and progressive groups along with a host of business leaders and faith-based organizations also support the *First Step Act*.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).