

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Working to create national criminal justice commission

Posted on Wednesday, Oct 16, 2019

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) today helped reintroduce the *National Criminal Justice Commission Act*, bipartisan legislation that would task a National Criminal Justice Commission to assess the entire system and propose reforms to address the most pressing issues facing the nation’s criminal justice system.

“Our criminal justice system needs a top-to-bottom review to ensure we’re doing everything we can to promote public safety, reduce crime and lower recidivism rates in Wisconsin and around the country,” **said Senator Baldwin**. “This bipartisan effort is an important step in the right direction to keep our communities safe and make the criminal justice system more just and fair.”

The legislation, led by Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and John Cornyn (R-TX), would create a 14-member, bipartisan National Criminal Justice Commission charged with completing an 18-month, comprehensive review of the national criminal justice system, including federal, state, local and tribal criminal justice systems, and issuing recommendations for changes in oversight, policies, practices and laws to reduce crime, increase public safety and promote confidence in the criminal justice system.

The Commission would be made up of Presidential and Congressional appointees, including experts on law enforcement, criminal justice, victims’ rights, civil liberties and social services. The Commission would also provide a better understanding of community relationships with law enforcement and the administration of justice

through our court system, and identify effective policies to address a broad range of issues in the criminal justice system including crime reduction, incarceration and prisoner reentry.

The last comprehensive review of the criminal justice system was conducted in 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson created the Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. The 1965 Commission's report offered over 200 recommendations that have shaped the current criminal justice system, including the creation of the 9-1-1 system establishment of research organizations like the Bureau of Justice Statistics and improved training and professionalization for law enforcement.

The *National Criminal Justice Commission Act* is supported by a broad coalition of criminal justice organizations, including law enforcement and criminal justice reform advocates.

“One of the challenges we face as we work toward comprehensive criminal justice reform is the need to take a fresh look at our entire criminal justice system,” **said Hilary O. Shelton, Director, NAACP Washington Bureau.** “The last time we looked closely and comprehensively at that system was with President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in 1967. The NAACP believes now is the time to fully reexamine our criminal justice system. Civil rights organizations and law enforcement groups have for years been calling for a thorough review of the criminal justice system, and events over the past few years have made it even more clear that we can’t wait any longer. We must address the challenges that undermine the basic tenets of justice, fairness, and equality and make crucial changes that will help strengthen the perception of integrity by all Americans, save lives, prevent crime and help law enforcement keep our communities even safer. We applaud Senators Peters, Graham and Cornyn for their bipartisan leadership on this effort and I look forward to working with them.

“The National Association of Police Organizations [NAPO] supports the creation of a National Criminal Justice Commission to review our criminal justice system and make recommendations to improve how we prevent, deter and reduce crime and

violence in our communities and protect the public safety,” **said Bill Johnson, Executive Director, NAPO.** “It is important that this Commission embraces the law enforcement perspective, including that of rank-and-file officers, and we thank Senators Peters, Graham and Cornyn for recognizing the important role law enforcement must play in shaping the future of the system. We look forward to continuing our work with them to pass the National Criminal Justice Commission Act.”

“It is evident that our criminal justice system is flawed and targets poor people and people of color disproportionately,” **said Ebonie Riley, DC Bureau Chief, National Action Network.** “The right to equal justice under the law should not be conditioned upon a person’s color or economic status. Over the last two decades, National Action Network has been in the vanguard of the movement to bring such equality to every community that has been unfairly treated. Our crisis department has and continues to handle miscarriages of justice firsthand. That is why we support the bipartisan efforts to create a National Criminal Justice Commission, and we thank Senators Peters, Graham and Cornyn for their leadership in this effort. We look forward to working with the commission to address the crucial challenges that affect our criminal justice system and we urge more bipartisan support as we all work towards a more inclusive justice system.”

“We strongly support a comprehensive review of all areas of the criminal justice system to ensure that fairness and equality are fully integrated at its every stage,” **said Marc H. Morial, President and CEO, National Urban League.** “The proposed Commission will perform such a review and will make findings and recommendations for changes to prevent, deter, and reduce crime and violence, reduce recidivism, improve cost-effectiveness, and ensure the interests of justice at every step of the criminal justice system. Such a review is long overdue. That is why the National Urban League applauds bipartisan efforts to create the National Criminal Justice Commission outlined in this bill. Through this Commission we also hope to identify solutions aimed at eliminating the school-to-prison pipeline that draw in too many of our youth. We applaud Senators Peters, Graham and Grassley for their leadership and look forward to working with the Commission.”

“The Police Chiefs from all over the nation were thrilled to see Senator Peters introduce this bill,” **said Art Acevedo, Houston Chief of Police and President**

of the Major Cities Chiefs Association. “It’s been over 50 years since there has been a comprehensive look at our criminal justice system and we urge every member of Congress to support this bill. So much has changed in our world and in our communities that has had an impact on criminal justice. This bill needs to pass and the President needs to sign it.”

Other cosponsors include Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Susan Collins (R-ME), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Tim Kaine (D-VA), John Kennedy (R-LA), Bob Casey (D-PA), Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM).

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