

Senator Tillis Applauds Passage of Criminal Justice Reform Legislation

By Administrator

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Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) applauded passage of the First Step Act, once in a generation bipartisan legislation that reforms America's criminal justice system. Senator Tillis worked hand in hand with Chairman Grassley, his Senate colleagues, and federal, state and local law enforcement on changes that would build additional support for the bipartisan legislation. "The First Step Act is the most significant reform to our broken criminal justice system in a generation," said Senator Thom Tillis. "I was proud to work with Chairman Grassley and my Senate colleagues to help improve this legislation and build the support needed to get it across the finish line. Passing criminal justice reform produced historic results in North Carolina, and I look forward to those benefits being replicated on the federal level."

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley praised Senator Tillis for his work to improve the First Step Act:

"Sen. Tillis has been instrumental in advancing bipartisan criminal justice reform. His continued engagement has helped to promote policy that reduces crime and recidivism, saves tax dollars, improves fairness in sentencing and supports law enforcement," said Chairman Chuck Grassley.

The comprehensive package aims to reduce crime by helping low-risk inmates prepare to successfully rejoin society through participation in proven recidivism reduction and professional development programs. It also improves fairness in prison sentences by recalibrating certain mandatory minimum sentences, granting greater discretion for judges in sentencing of low-level, nonviolent drug crimes and clarifying congressional intent on sentencing enhancements for certain crimes involving firearms. It also preserves the maximum potential sentences for violent and career criminals. The legislation also 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.

Senator Tillis has been a longtime advocate of criminal justice reform, recognizing that it can strike the balance between reducing crime and making our justice system more equitable, when done right. As North Carolina Speaker of the House in 2011, he spearheaded the passage of the Justice Reinvestment Act, sweeping criminal justice reform legislation. The law places an emphasis on rehabilitation and reducing the likelihood of returning to prison, requiring those incarcerated on felony charges to be supervised for 9 to 12 months following their release. The law has resulted in a reduction in North Carolina's prison population and a significant, double-digit decrease in the recidivism rate. The N.C. Department of Public Safety estimates that the law has also saved hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars over the last several years.