

Here are a few facts I learned this session about crime and punishment in Connecticut:

- Crime is at a 30 year low.
- The average length of sentences in Connecticut ranks 5th in the country, ahead of Texas.
- There are nearly 20,000 inmates in Connecticut prisons today, almost triple the 6,923 in jail twenty years ago. We've added 1,500 more in just the last 2 years.
- Approximately 600-700 inmates, who could be released, are still in prison because they are mentally ill and homeless.
- The Department of Corrections spent about \$18 million more than budgeted this year because of the burgeoning prison population. Most of it was for overtime.
- Connecticut pays \$1.7 million per day to house our prison population. That's over \$641 million per year.
- In the 1980's we spent four times as much on higher education as we did on prisons in Connecticut. Now we spend more on prisons than higher education.
- Over 95% of criminal cases are plea bargained and do not go to court. If a prosecutor's hands are tied on the sentencing, he cannot plea bargain, but he can reduce the charges to a lesser crime, where he can plea bargain.
- Murderers can be sentenced to life even on the "first strike."

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD, CT
Permit No. 3937

Linda Schofield
State Representative

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE
BUILDING ROOM 4044
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591
Capitol: 1-800-842-8267
District: (860) 651-8739
Linda.Schofield@cga.ct.gov

State Representative
Linda Schofield

Capitol: 1-800-842-8267
District: (860) 651-8739
Linda.Schofield@cga.ct.gov

I look forward to hearing from you!



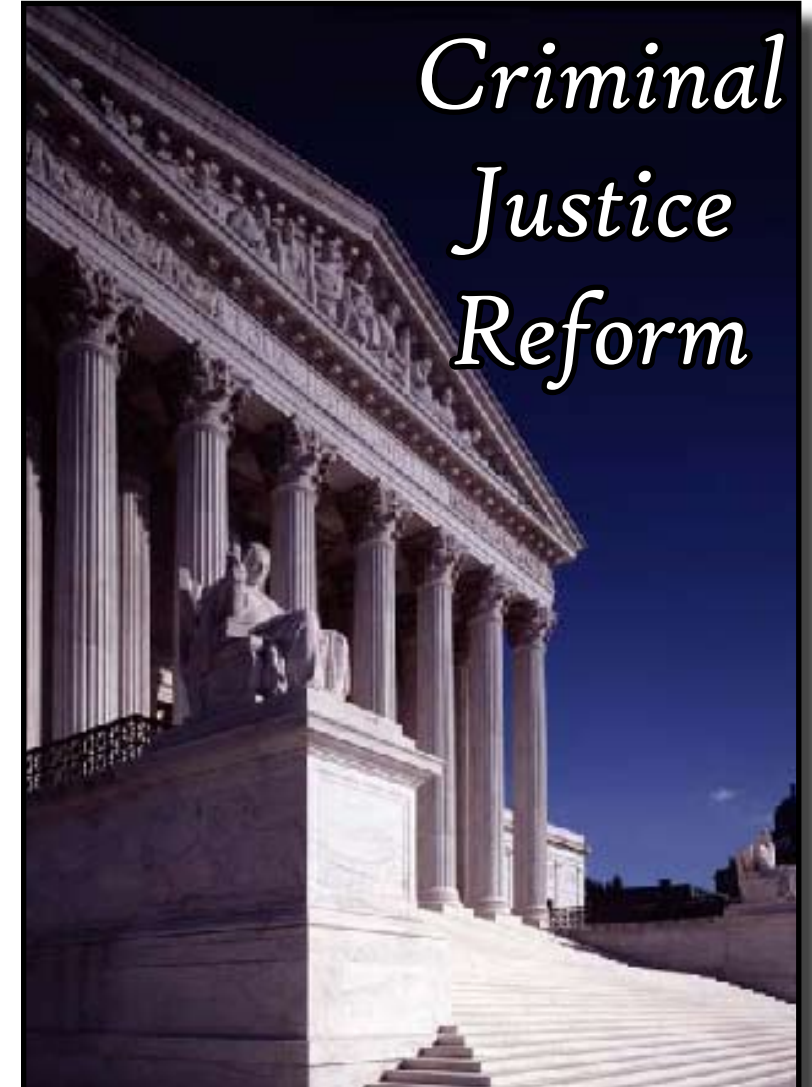
State Representative
Linda Schofield

Proudly Serving the 16th District

Simsbury, West Simsbury,
Tariffville & Weatogue



**Criminal
Justice
Reform**



Dear Friends,

There has been great concern over the recent violent crimes that headlined in the press. These horrific assaults exposed serious weaknesses in our criminal justice system. After undertaking a careful, deliberative process, my colleagues and I have enacted a comprehensive reform package designed to close those loopholes and better protect our communities.

The new laws take into account the recommendations of the Governor's task force, prosecutors, judges and the legislature's Judiciary Committee. These provisions underwent a detailed review process and passed with strong bipartisan support. This newsletter includes the highlights of the reform package. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for the honor of serving you.

Sincerely,

Linda Schofield
State Representative

Public Acts 08-1 "Concerning Criminal Justice Reform," and **08-51** "Concerning Persistent Dangerous Felony Offenders," both combine to close several loopholes in our criminal justice system and to strengthen penalties, which will result in improved safety for our communities.

Making our communities safer



Problem:

In order to apply the persistent offender law, prosecutors were required to prove that a defendant had a history and character that warranted extended incarceration.

Penalties for burglary of an occupied residence were no different than penalties of an unoccupied residence.

The Parole Board made decisions based on incomplete documentation.

There was a lack of adequate information sharing among state agencies.

Victim input on parole decisions was limited.

Inmates who were released 30 days early on furloughs received less supervision than they would receive under probation. Recently, furloughs were being used to ease prison overcrowding.



Some offenders were released from jail and returned to the community without adequate supervision or transition services.

Solution:

- Now prosecutors only have to show that a defendant has prior convictions to apply a longer sentence.

- Establishes a new violent crime of "home invasion."
- Increases penalties for burglary of a dwelling at night.
- Requires nighttime burglars and home invaders to serve at least 85% of the sentence imposed, up from 50%, prior to parole.

- Expands parole board membership, adding more expertise.
- Requires that full inmate histories be provided in a timely manner, so that the panel can make informed decisions.

- Requires the creation of an integrated information technology system to share offender and case data.

- Allows family members of victims to testify at parole hearings.
- Requires the Judicial Branch to notify victims when the court is considering a plea bargain.
- Mandates the Judicial Branch to post arrest warrant information online, similar to the way information is currently posted on sex offenders.

- Restricts furloughs to low-risk inmates with special circumstances, such as visiting a dying relative, attending a funeral or going to a job interview.

- Requires global positioning system (GPS) monitoring of 300 more parolees.
- Establishes tougher and more secure re-entry procedures for offenders returning to the community.
- Enhances diversionary services for less serious offenders with psychiatric disorders.
- Ends administrative review for parolees and requires an in-person or video hearing before inmates are paroled.