

Vote Thursday or Friday

Support the Reintegration of Youthful Offenders Program *Vote Yes on the Bobby Scott Amendment to the Labor-HHS-Education Bill*

June 22, 2005

Dear Representatives,

We urge members of Congress to support Representative Bobby Scott's amendment to the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill that will shift \$10 million to the Department of Labor's Reintegration of Youthful Offenders Program from the Department of Education's Student Drug Testing program. This is an opportunity to save a program that is crucial to re-entry efforts and cut an ineffective and punitive program that may be doing more harm than good.

The Reintegration of Youthful Offenders Program is key to ensuring that young people who have made mistakes can get a second chance and move forward with their lives. This program provides millions of dollars per year for re-entry services for young offenders. Most notably it helps youthful offenders get high-paying jobs by funding occupational training, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities; job placement efforts; reading and math remediation; and efforts to help youth offenders enter community colleges and four-year colleges.

President George W. Bush said in his 2004 State of the Union Address, "America is the land of second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life." More so than for any other group, it is especially important to facilitate opportunities for young people to get their lives on track and become productive members of society. Reaching out to them early on is vital to ensuring their growth into productive, prosperous, law-abiding members of the community.

While the Reintegration of Youthful Offenders Program is crucial in helping young people turn their lives around, the Student Drug Testing Program is, at best, an unproven program, and at worst, potentially counterproductive in reducing drug abuse among young people. The largest national study on student drug testing found *no difference* in illegal drug use among students in drug testing versus non-drug testing schools.¹ Based on data collected between 1998 and 2001 from 76,000 students nationwide in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades, the study found that drug testing did not have an impact on illicit drug use among students, including athletes. The study also noted, "In addition to effectiveness, other issues should be weighed by policy makers that were not addressed in this paper, including cost-effectiveness, false positives through poor training and handling, and alienation and resistance from students."

Dr. Lloyd D. Johnston, director of *Monitoring the Future*, the leading federal survey of trends in student drug use, reports, "[The national study] suggests that there really isn't an impact from drug

¹ Ryoko Yamaguchi, Lloyd D. Johnston, Patrick M. O'Malley, "Relationship Between Student Illicit Drug Use and School Drug Testing Policies," *Journal of School Health* 73.4 (2003): 159-64.

testing as practiced...I don't think it brings about any constructive changes in their attitudes about drugs or their belief in the dangers associated with them."² Since drug testing is often a condition of participation in an extracurricular activity, it also has the unanticipated effect of deterring students from participating in after school activities, which have been proven to reduce youth drug use.

Numerous drug prevention programs are effective in reducing youth drug use. In fact, states receive hundreds of millions of dollars a year from the federal government for youth drug prevention. Unfortunately, few federal programs exist to help youthful offenders get back on their feet. One of the best programs, the Reintegration of Youthful Offenders program, was eliminated by the House Appropriations Committee.

Although \$10 million is only one-fifth the amount the program was funded at last year, it is enough to keep the program alive in the House. The Senate should fully fund the program. Under this amendment, states would still be free to use their share of the Safe and Drug Free School block grants to fund student drug testing, so hundreds of millions of dollars would still be available for student drug testing. Without this amendment, the Reintegration of Youthful Offenders Program would be completely eliminated. Representatives should vote for the Bobby Scott amendment to shift \$10 million from student drug testing to the Reintegration of Youthful Offenders program.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union
American Correctional Association
Bay Area Police Watch (Oakland, CA)
Center for Law and Education
Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice
Drug Policy Alliance
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Family Justice
Federal Prison Policy Project
Laramie Progressive Action Collective (Laramie, WY)
Music for America
NAADAC: The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Police Association
National Council of La Raza
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
Safer Foundation (Chicago, IL)
Society for Adolescent Medicine
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
UpFront (CA)

² Greg Winter, "Study Finds No Sign That Testing Deters Students' Drug Use," *New York Times* 17 May 2003.