



LIBERTARIAN PARTY OF ILLINOIS

GOVERNOR SAVING MONEY IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Recently, Governor Patrick Quinn announced an initiative to save taxpayers approximately \$5 million a year by letting 1,000 prisoners out early. Quinn also stated that his intention was to release only “non-violent criminals.” News reports have indicated that among those criminals granted release were serving time for domestic battery, felony drunk driving and burglary, hardly non-violent offenses.

The Libertarian Party of Illinois feels the initiative is misguided in several ways.

First, a substantial savings in the cost of incarceration would be realized by changing the drug laws in the state. The 2008 Annual Report of the Illinois Department of Corrections reported that nearly 23% of the prison population (10,352 inmates) were serving time for controlled substance and cannabis related crimes. Based on the calculation of saving \$5 million per year for 1,000 inmates, this would result in an annual savings of over \$50 million by decriminalizing drugs and releasing all non-violent drug offenders. In addition, sentencing those guilty of financial crimes with restitution only would save money for the prison system.

Second, the state needs to look “within” for additional cost savings for taxpayers. Illinois’ debt is in the billions of dollars, and a \$5 million savings which results in violent offenders re-appearing in the general public is both a drop in the bucket and a poor tradeoff. Illinois needs to cut its’ bureaucracy by eliminating jobs and slashing salaries, as well as changing the pension system for public employees. This would send a positive message to citizens in this current economic climate.

Third, we need to allow people to feel safe when out in public. Illinois is only one of two states (the other being Wisconsin) which does not allow concealed carry of weapons. We would have fewer violent offenders in the states’ prisons, and the cost of running the jails would decrease as a result, if these criminals knew their potential victims could be armed and able to defend themselves. You don’t hear about violent crimes being committed at gun shows.

The State of Illinois needs to be more fiscally sound, more prudent on what types of criminal offenses result in jail sentences, and more realistic as to the prevention of violent crimes. This would add up to savings for taxpayers and a better rationale for who goes to jail.

The Libertarian Party of Illinois is a political home for those who value honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility and compassion.

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