

### Rep. Scott and Rep. Castle Introduce Youth PROMISE Act

*February 18, 2009*

WASHINGTON, DC- On Friday, February 13, 2009, Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA-03) and Congressman Mike Castle (R-DE-AL) re-introduced the Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunity Mentoring, Intervention, Support and Education, or Youth PROMISE Act. The Youth PROMISE Act was re-introduced with 69 original co-sponsors in the House, 58 more than last year when introduced. Companion legislation was also introduced in the US Senate by Senators Robert Casey (D-PA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME).

The Youth PROMISE Act implements the best policy recommendations from crime policy makers, researchers, practitioners, analysts, and law enforcement officials from across the political spectrum concerning evidence- and research-based strategies to reduce gang violence and crime. Under the Youth PROMISE Act, communities facing the greatest youth gang and crime challenges will each form a local council called a Promise Coordinating Council ("PCC"). The PCC will include representatives from law enforcement, court services, schools, social service organizations, health and mental health providers and community-based organizations, including faith-based organizations. The PCC will then develop a comprehensive plan for implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies. These strategies will target young people who are at-risk of becoming involved, or who are already involved in, gangs or the criminal justice system to redirect them toward productive and law-abiding alternatives.

"During my more than 30 years of public service, I have learned that when it comes to crime policy, we have a choice - we can reduce crime or we can play politics," Mr. Scott said. "For far too long, Congress has chosen to play politics by enacting 'tough on crime' slogans whose impacts range from a negligible reduction in crime to an *increase* in crime. As a result, the United States now has the highest average incarceration rate of any nation in the world and the cost of incarceration in this country has risen to over \$65 billion a year. All the credible research and evidence shows that a continuum of evidenced-based prevention and intervention programs for at-risk youth will greatly reduce crime **and** save much more than they cost. This is what the Youth PROMISE Act will do," Scott added.

The bill also provides for law enforcement support through "Youth Oriented Policing Services" (YOPS), and a victim/witness assistance program. New provisions of the Youth PROMISE Act this year provide additional grants to high intensity gang localities to reduce or alleviate the effects of gang violence, and grants to localities to fund police and community collaborative programs to provide crime prevention, research, and intervention services designed to prevent crime by at-risk youth and youth gang members.

"I have long believed that the best way to reduce violence in this country is through prevention, and the Youth PROMISE Act does just that," said Rep. Castle. "We must engage youth in positive ways through education, after school programs, sports, as well as family and community support to keep kids away from the dangers of gangs and other violent activities."

The Youth PROMISE Act was supported last Congress by over 200 national and state juvenile justice, civil rights, education and religious organizations, including Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, the National Juvenile Defender Center, the Justice Policy Institute, the NAACP Washington DC Office, the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, and the Campaign for Youth Justice, among others. We expect that list to continue to grow this Congress.

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