



Part Two: “Rhode Island the Throw Away State” Reviewing the Murder Sentencing Legislation Introduced for the 2015 Session for Passage into law.

This year has seen some of the highest homicide rates in Rhode Island since past years. There were over 21 homicides in the capitol city alone for 2014. The Alliance for Safe Communities wonders if this is the year a review of murder sentencing guidelines will pass into legislation. In last month's article in Common Ground, the Alliance outlined 9 specific homicides among several overall who's depravity rose to the level of questioning, is Rhode Island becoming a “Throw Away State” ?

Homicide is in itself one of the most heinous crimes without question, however while the studying of murder sentencing guidelines have been mulled over these last three years, a new trend has been noticed.

Last month the Alliance outlined 9 homicides where individuals were not only murdered but the victims bodies were further defiled by being discarded in a variety of horrific fashions.

Within the review of cases including; stuffing bodies in garbage cans, recycle bins, set on fire, dismembered, and dumped on public lands only one case has yet to be fully sentenced and seen to it's finality. Alfred Brissette , Rhode Island's “ thrill killer” served only 13 years of a 40 year sentence for the brutal “ thrill kill” of Jeanette Descateux in 1999. Brissette released in 2013 had accrued an obscene amount of good time credits for an early release date that shocked Rhode Islanders. His release spurred the inception of the first drafted “murder sentencing guidelines” legislation. The other 8 cases highlighted in our last article were either unsolved or moved to pending status and all occurred within the last three years.

Despite the depravity our state has sunk into following these homicide cases, one constant remains steadfast, when and if these monsters are convicted, they will be sentenced under current guidelines.

Senate Bill 132 and House Bill 5158 would require changes that we should take serious consideration to be implemented. This legislation may offer a deterrent to minimalizing homicides with consequences that may also stop this level of depravity recently escalating.

House Bill 5158 and Senate Bill 132 Contents pertinent to Sentencing Guidelines for Murder

- 1) In the case of a conviction for a first or second degree murder committed after June 30, 2015, when the prisoner has not been sentenced to life, the prisoner shall not be eligible for a parole permit until he/she has served at least 50% of his or her sentence.
- 2) In the case of a prisoner sentenced to imprisonment for life for a first or second degree murder committed after June 30, 2015, the permit may be issued only after the prisoner has served not less than 30 years imprisonment.
- 3) In the case of a prisoner sentenced consecutively to more than one life term for crimes including first or second degree murder occurring after June 30, 2015 the permit may be issued only after the prisoner has served not less than 20 years consecutively on each life sentence.

The Alliance has highlighted only the crimes inclusive of murder sentencing guidelines for these bills. It is important for Rhode Islander's to realize that inmates are eligible to earn good time credits for early release when actively participating in the following during incarceration. These credits are awarded to inmates who are convicted and also serving time for murder. The repeal of good time credits for those who committed the heinous crime of murder in 2012, legislation only applied to accrued credits awarded for "good behavior credits" while incarcerated.

Current Credits Eligible and Earned by Inmates convicted of Murder Explained:

- 1) Program participation= 5 days per mos.
- 2) Program completion for each program = 30 days per mos.
- 3) Industrial/ work job credits = 2days per mos.

It is our hope that given the review of the escalating number of homicides as well as the pattern of depravity involved in these cases occurring for review in the last three years our legislators will find it prudent to take these necessary measures in sentencing guidelines moving forward. These changes in murder sentencing guidelines, offers leverage and the tools judges need to implement sentences more realistic to the heinousness of the crime of murder and homicide. The Alliance for Safe Communities applauds the efforts of Senator Raptakis who has led the

efforts with this reforming legislation, and persevered with great patients through the amending process in the last three years. The Alliance also commends Representative Serpa and Representative Hull with their efforts in achieving the passage of this legislation.

The Alliance cannot express strongly enough, the need to bring this legislation into fruition with passing it into law. Lives are to be considered as we continue to hesitate and the status quo must change.

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