

3000 in Delaware join SURJ for criminal justice reform

This summer SURJ's membership topped 3,000. We would like to extend a warm thank you to all of SURJ's supporters who speak up for the quality of justice in this state. By lending your voice to our shared dialogue, members ensure that SURJ continues to educate the community and policymakers about critical criminal justice issues.

How can you help support SURJ in its mission?

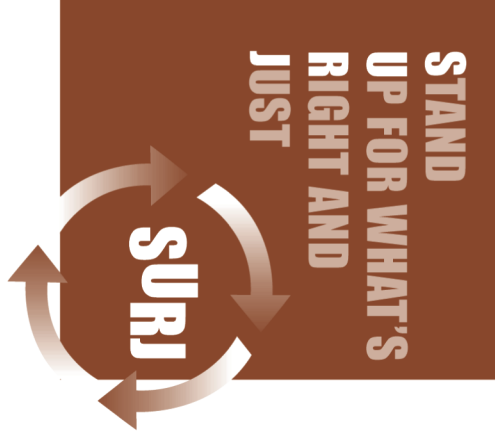
- Invite a member of SURJ's Speakers' Bureau to your place of worship, organization or club to discuss criminal justice reform in Delaware.
- Call or e-mail Dana (dsorenson@suri.org) and ask her to send you a packet of brochures and new membership cards so that you can spread the word about the important work that SURJ is doing in this state. Or ask her about opportunities to join SURJ staff at an information booth at upcoming events—you can sign up for a two-hour time slot.
- Sunday, August 21, Festival Hispano, Millsboro
- Saturday, September 17, Harrington Heritage Day
- Sunday, September 18, Newark Community Days

Many thanks to these organizations that support House Bill 181

Delaware's Faith Community: Bishop, Delaware-Maryland Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church of America • Catholic Diocese of Wilmington • Churches Take a Corner (CTAC) • Episcopal Church Diocese of Delaware • Interdenominational Ministers' Action Council (IMAC) • Lutheran Office on Public Policy, Delaware • Peninsula Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church • Prison Fellowship Ministries® • Prison Ministries of Delaware • First Unitarian Society, Social Justice Working Group, Wilmington, DE

Delaware Community Organizations: A. Philip Randolph Institute • Addictions Coalition of Delaware • A.F.L.-C.I.O., Delaware • AFSCME, Delaware Public Employees Council 81 • AIDS Delaware • American Association of University Women of Delaware (AAUW) • American Civil Liberties Union of Delaware (ACLU) • CHILD, Inc. • Children and Families First • Common Cause, Delaware • Delaware A.C.O.R.N. • Delaware Center for Justice, Inc. • Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence • Delaware Coalition for Human Rights • Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council • Delaware NAACP • Delaware Psychological Association • Delaware Trial Lawyers Association • Grassroots Citizens for Children • H.E.R.O.I.N. Hurts, Inc. • Latin American Community Center • League of Women Voters, Delaware • Libertarian Party of Delaware • Mental Health Association, Delaware • Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League • National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Delaware • National Association of Social Workers, Delaware Chapter • Pacem in Terris

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In The News

Repeal of Mandatory Minimum Drug Laws Stalled Further Action Set for 2006

Unfortunately, SURJ's bill to repeal mandatory minimum drug sentencing laws, House Bill 181, was not voted on by the House of Representatives during the final hours of the legislative session in June. Several House supporters believe the legislation will fare better in 2006, and SURJ plans to continue its push for this bill when the legislative session returns early next year.

SURJ's Legal Team and Others in Action

On June 2nd, SURJ's House Bill 181 was unanimously reported from the House Judiciary Committee, following a successful presentation by SURJ's Legal Team: Assistant Public Defender Brian Bartley; and Former Deputy Attorneys General Ned Carpenter, Tom Foley, and Jim Liguori.

The SURJ attorneys emphasized the importance of restoring discretion to Delaware's distinguished judges by removing sentencing laws that impose "one size fits all" sentences on offenders and prevent judges from considering the many mitigating factors in each case. Attorney Tom Foley stated, "After my ten years of prosecuting drug offenders, I have found that no single sentence works for all people. Assembly line justice is not effective."

Former Delaware Attorney General Charles Oberly, III, and former Delaware Superior Court Judge Joshua W. Martin, III both submitted statements of support for the committee's consideration. Oberly noted, "During my twelve-year tenure as Attorney General, I opposed mandatory sentencing in the area of drug offenses....I have no hesitation in recommending that our judges be vested with complete sentencing authority in deciding the appropriate sentences for drug offenses."

In his statement, Judge Martin remarked, "It is time to move away from the unnecessary injustice risked by one-size-fits-all mandatory minimum drug laws and return sentencing discretion, under sentencing guidelines, to our outstanding judiciary."

After hearing all arguments, a majority of the eight Representatives present indicated support for the bill, and it was unanimously reported from committee.

Our Good Work on HB 181 Will Continue

We can take pride in moving the bill another notch further toward success. We gained the support of more than 40 legislators, Delaware's judicial and legal community, and three dozen of Delaware's community and religious organizations (including terrific letters of support from the Catholic, Episcopalian and Lutheran Bishops).

Many thanks to all members who contacted legislators and contributed to our impressive gathering of community support.

Welcome Stephanie, Goodbye Josh



Stephanie Symons has joined SURJ as its executive director in early August. Stephanie received her Juris Doctor from Temple University School of Law and is currently awaiting admission to the Delaware Bar. In addition, she earned her Master's Degree in Public Policy from the University of Delaware in May. SURJ will benefit greatly from Stephanie's outstanding set of legal skills and knowledge of public policy.

Stephanie's leadership experience and active involvement in policy issues are reflected in her former positions and activities. At the University of Delaware, she served as Vice President of the Graduate Student Research Assistant Organization, completing a variety of community service projects throughout Delaware. She also worked for the University's Center for Research and Service, gathering and analyzing data for the Delaware State Police's traffic stop study and conducting research for the Local TV News Media Project. This summer Stephanie served as a law clerk at Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. in Dover, where she focused on family and elder law.



Executive Director **Josh Templet** left SURJ at the end of July to journey to the West Coast, where he plans to attend law school. Josh began his work with SURJ in June 2003 as deputy director, working with then Executive Director Tom Eichler. As deputy director, Josh developed SURJ's grassroots support, worked on legislative initiatives and managed SURJ's office. When Tom Eichler retired in the summer of 2004, Josh served as acting director and was named executive director in 2005.

According to SURJ Board Member Edmund N. Carpenter, II, Esq., "Josh has an attitude to life and SURJ that has never lost intensity. He was never an amateur and we are ever lastingly grateful for what he did!"

SURJ Chair Dale Wolf commented: "It has been a real pleasure to see Josh's leadership blossom, to see first hand his devotion to the SURJ objectives, and to be a part of the credibility he has maintained and the tremendous support he has generated. Our goals are closer to fruition and SURJ is a better organization because Josh was our executive director. I am saddened to see him move on at this time, but understand his objectives and sincerely hope he comes back to Delaware to practice law. SURJ is very fortunate that Stephanie will have the opportunity to work with Josh for a few weeks before he leaves."

In bidding farewell to SURJ, Josh said, "I am grateful to SURJ's Board and all our SURJ members for their devotion and passion. I will miss, so much, the many great people who have lent their time and energy to our shared cause."

SURJ and Delaware Center for Justice to Study Ex-Offender Reentry

SURJ and the Delaware Center for Justice are continuing to plan the launch of the Delaware Reentry Roundtable. The Roundtable would convene a panel of key state policymakers, community leaders and experts; equip them with reentry data; and charge them with developing a strategic plan of prioritized, research-based recommendations to improve the success of ex-offenders reentering the community.

The Roundtable is planned to take place over the course of five sessions, beginning this fall. The SURJ office will be in touch with further details.

Why we need to address reentry in Delaware

97% of Delaware's inmates will one day return to the community. Unfortunately, nearly 60 percent of those released from prison return within five years. This high recidivism implies a lack of reentry success and a troubling cycle of crime.

A select number of low-income communities, home to a comparatively large number of ex-offenders, are particularly devastated by this cycle of crime, which splits families apart and destabilizes communities. Further, as it costs up to \$26,400 a year to incarcerate an individual in Delaware, poor recidivism rates drain resources that could be used for education, social services and community development.

Upon release, the ex-offender faces a myriad of challenges: finding affordable housing, reconnecting with children and families, finding effective treatment programs, and seeking employment, to name a few. Removing and rethinking such barriers to reentry promises to improve ex-offenders' chances of becoming contributing members of society.

Senate Bill 200

SURJ members can take satisfaction in the passage of Senate Bill 200 (passed unanimously by the House and the Senate). This bill promises to ensure that fewer juveniles are unnecessarily transferred to the adult court and adult corrections system, where their chances of successfully returning to the community and remaining crime-free have been shown to significantly diminish.

Thank you to UD Interns!

This summer the SURJ office has benefited from the help of University of Delaware interns Joanna Champney and Katie Feeley. Joanna, who is studying Political Science, recently worked as an intern at the Howard R. Young Correctional Institution. She has researched ex-offender reentry and mandatory minimum drug sentencing laws and has contributed to this newsletter and SURJ's website. Katie, an International Relations major, has also lent her enthusiasm to SURJ as an energetic researcher and fact-checker. We want to extend a warm thank you to both Katie and Joanna for all their hard work. A thank you is also due to April Sherwood, who is studying law at Widener University. April has volunteered several hours each week to help in the SURJ office. Her assistance has been much appreciated.