

Governor Rauner announces significant steps in reforming Illinois' criminal justice system

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Illinois Youth Center Murphysboro to be repurposed into re-entry facility; closing oldest, most outdated unit at Stateville Correctional Center

MURPHYSBORO – Governor Bruce Rauner today announced significant steps that continue the administration's efforts to reform the criminal justice system and reduce the rate of recidivism. He instructed the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) to repurpose the Illinois Youth Center Murphysboro into a Life Skills and Re-Entry

Facility and close the F House at Stateville Correctional Center. The focus of the new minimum security facility will be preparing offenders for a successful transition out of the corrections system through educational, vocational and life skills training.

“The people of Illinois believe in redemption. We believe in second chances. All of us at one time or another have needed the opportunity to turn a wrong into a right,” Governor Rauner said. “Since coming into office, criminal justice reform has been among our top priorities. Today, I am proud to announce another step forward in our efforts to bring compassion and efficiency to our justice system. This great program will help offenders gain valuable skills that will enable them to re-enter society as productive citizens. Our hope is that the new Life Skills and Re-Entry Facility at Murphysboro will help put an end to the cycle of recidivism that plagues our criminal justice system and give offenders a real shot at a second chance.”

The Governor was joined at the Murphysboro announcement by IDOC Director John Baldwin, Senator Dave Luechtefeld (R-Okawville) and Representative Terri Bryant (R-Murphysboro). All were crucial in making progress on this commonsense reform to Illinois’ criminal justice system.

“Reopening Murphysboro as a Life Skills Re-entry Facility just makes sense,” says IDOC Director John Baldwin. “People who complete their sentences pay their debt to society and deserve a second chance to rebuild their lives and rebuild their families. That's why we are equipping them with evidence based job skills, communication skills, and other life skills that will give them a hand up when they are released from custody.”

“The reopening of the Murphysboro IYC is welcomed news for our area. Obviously, it means jobs, but it’s also a key piece of the puzzle of criminal justice reform being sought by the Governor,” said Sen. Dave Luechtefeld (R-Okawville). “The facility will be low-risk to Murphysboro and the surrounding area. The inmates to be housed there will be nearing release and ready to head home. They will receive important life skills education that will give them hope and an opportunity to get their lives back on track. The best way to reduce recidivism is to provide inmates with the skills they need to re-enter society as full participants.”

“Reopening Murphysboro is a step in the right direction on many levels,” said Rep. Terri Bryant (R-Murphysboro). “The fact is this modern facility should have never closed; and now Governor Rauner is taking a careful, thoughtful approach towards its long-term functionality. We can now take that facility down a new path to help improve Illinois’ awful recidivism rates, creating not only correctional positions, but also positions that assist with rehabilitation, re-entry and education. In short, this is a tremendous opportunity.”

In addition to the announcement of the Murphysboro facility's repurposing, the Governor also announced that F House at Stateville Correctional Center will be closed. F House is one of the state's oldest and most costly prison housing units. Built in 1922, F House is the only remaining "roundhouse" in use in the United States. It's panopticon layout is antiquated and creates safety and operational hazards for both staff and offenders. Offenders will be moved to available vacant assignments appropriate for their designated level of supervision. Employees who currently work in F House will be reassigned to existing, vacant posts throughout the Stateville Correctional Center.

"The John Howard Association of Illinois (JHA) applauds today's announcement by Governor Rauner to close the 'roundhouse', F House, at Stateville Correctional Center," Jennifer Vollen-Katz, Executive Director of The John Howard Association said.

"Closing the roundhouse is an important step for Illinois, as JHA has been reporting for several years, F House was not fit for human habitation. The conditions of confinement in the roundhouse were wholly unacceptable and worsened by the inherently flawed panopticon design which magnified the already distressing auditory and visually chaotic experience prison frequently inflicts."

Upon taking office, Governor Rauner established the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform to examine criminal justice and sentencing policies, practices, and resource allocation in Illinois. They were tasked with improving public safety outcomes and reducing Illinois' prison population by 25 percent before 2025. Last December, that bipartisan commission presented 14 recommendations to the state to help accomplish that goal. Since then, a number of those recommendations have been signed into law. In addition, the Department of Corrections (DOC) has taken executive actions to improve and expand the use of data and enact better policies to help with the rehabilitation of offenders prior to their release.

Video of the event will be posted [here](#).