

Madison County Board Chairman Prenzler speaks out about criminal justice reform bill

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EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County Board Chairman Kurt Prenzler believes a comprehensive criminal justice reform bill signed into law earlier this month could relieve overcrowding at the county jail.

“The Bail Reform Act is an important step in decreasing the number of inmates in county jails,” Prenzler said.

Prenzler praised Governor Bruce Rauner, who signed SB 2034 into law on June 9. He said the new law is set up to prevent the overcrowding in county jails of low-level, non-violent offenders who cannot pay their bail.

“Being poor shouldn’t be the only reason you are kept in jail,” Prenzler said.

The new law gives rights to inmates to ask for a bail rehearing and allow for non-cash bail for minor crimes. Under the law, if an inmate is unable to pay the cash bond, a rehearing on the bail must be held within seven days.

County Administrator Doug Hulme receives a daily report of the jail population. On Tuesday, it reached an all time high of 348 inmates.

“The jail is authorized to hold 312 inmates,” Hulme said. “This new law comes at an opportune time for Madison County.”

County Board member Mike Walters said in the nine years he’s served on the Judiciary Committee, of which he is now chair, the jail population has never been at this level.

“This law helps everyone,” Walters said. “Someone who gets arrested for a non-violent crime shouldn’t have to sit in jail just because he or she cannot afford to pay to get out.”

Walters said he plans to bring up the new law next week at the Judiciary Committee meeting, which will be held at 8:30 a.m., July 7 at the Madison County Administration Building.

Prenzler said, “This law is a step forward, both for prisoners and for taxpayers.”