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MEDIA RELEASE

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Life after Lock Up

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A PERSON IS RELEASED FROM JAIL OR PRISON?

What happens after a person is released from jail or prison? The answer to this question is an essential part of public safety. Do we want them coming back to the community with no place to live? no job skills? no support system? If you answered "yes" to those questions, you are begging for them commit another crime and create more victims. If you answered "no," you are interested in making your community safer. (*read page 2 of this media release for supporting information*)

As the recently formed Newport News Re-Entry Council gains traction, it will be holding town hall meetings throughout the city. The public is encouraged to attend and come with questions and ideas. The Council's mission is to develop strategies to help meet a person's needs for a *successful* transition back into society.

The Council is working in collaboration with the Mayor's Task Force on Teenage and Young Adult Violence Reduction and other stakeholders. The Newport News Sheriff's Office is a proud member of the Re-Entry Council.

The Re-Entry Council will hold a town hall meeting Monday, October 24, 2011 at An Achievable Dream Middle and High School, 5720 Marshall Avenue, Newport News from 6:00 p.m. -- 8:00 p.m. The first hour will be devoted to an exhibit from service providers. Private, non-profit, and faith-based organizations will display information and interact with attendees. The second hour is reserved for a Q & A session between a panel of experts and the audience.

WHO: Newport News Re-Entry Council
WHAT: Town Hall, "Issues & Answers"
WHEN: Monday, October 24, 2011
6:00 p.m. -- 8:00 p.m.
(*Exhibitors from 6-7; Town Hall Panel of Experts from 7-8*)
WHERE: An Achievable Dream Middle and High School
5720 Marshall Avenue
Newport News, VA

Read excerpts (page 2 of media release) of Congressman Bobby Scott's opinion piece published by the Daily Press September 24, 2011 and the newspaper's editorial stance published September 26, 2011.

Source: Daily Press, September 24, 2011
Our choice: Reduce crime or play politics
U.S. Congressman Bobby Scott (D) VA 3rd District

"I have served as a member of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee for more than 18 years, serving as Chairman or Ranking Democrat Member of the Subcommittee on Crime for 12 of those years. I also served for 15 years before that as a member of the Virginia General Assembly with nine years on the Senate Courts of Justice Committee, the Judiciary Committee equivalent in the General Assembly.

In those 33 years, I learned that when it comes to crime policy, we have a choice — we can reduce crime or we can play politics. Reducing crime requires science and evidenced based strategies that identify youth at risk of becoming criminals and re-directs them toward productive, contributing lives.

Playing politics, on the other hand, involves making crime policy based on slogans and sound bites that appeal to the emotions provoked by crime. "Three strikes, you're out", "life without parole", "abolish parole", "mandatory minimum sentencing", "truth-in-sentencing" and "do the adult crime, do the adult time" are prime examples of such rhetoric.

As a result of these policies, incarceration levels in the United States has more than quadrupled over the past 30 years: from about 500,000 in 1980 to more than 2.3 million today... Incarceration is a very expensive way to respond to crime and especially so when it is counterproductive... The Children's Defense Fund's "Cradle to Prison Pipeline" study revealed that about a third of Black boys born today will end up in prison in their lifetime without an effective intervention to change the trajectory under which they were born....

All the credible evidence shows that a continuum of proven programs aimed at at-risk youth will greatly reduce crime. That's why I introduced the "Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention and Education Act", or "Youth PROMISE Act." It calls for law enforcement, social services, education, mental health, juvenile court, private non-profit, business, faith-based, and other organizations and individuals working with at-risk youth to come together to develop a plan... the Youth PROMISE Act establishes a "cradle to college or cradle to the workforce pipeline." This approach has been shown many times to produce savings.

Source: Daily Press, September 26, 2011
Editorial: Prison reform overdue
Our penal system is both morally and fiscally broken

Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-Newport News) has been championing prison reform for some time. A close look at the facts suggests he may be right. Today, the United States has the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world. More than 2.3 million U.S. citizens — nearly one in every 100 — live behind bars.

Although Americans make up less than five percent of the world's population, our nation accounts for 25 percent of the globe's prisoners. The U.S. incarcerates five times as many prisoners as Britain, 12 times as many as Japan and more than China, which has four times the population.

The figures for the commonwealth are even worse: Virginia ranks 12th, well above the national average. The state now has more than 38,000 prisoners — one of every 89 adults...

The national costs are astonishing: around \$69 billion per year, not including prison construction. Commonwealth taxpayers fork over almost eight percent of the state's entire budget just for keeping their criminals under lock and key...

Fifty-five percent of federal and 20 percent of state prisoners are jailed for drug crimes. Rehabilitation costs an average of \$8,000 a year, compared to the \$30,000 annual price tag for housing a prisoner...

When Texas prison rates were cut by eight percent, its crime rate decreased by six percent. Why? The Lone Star state didn't just release inmates; it placed them under community supervision, in halfway houses and in treatment facilities. Moreover, it linked the funding of those programs to their ability to reduce the recidivism rate. It worked: the Texas crime rate in 2010 dropped to its lowest level since 1973.

The lesson from Texas is that we can push for reforms that save money, keep law-abiding Americans safe and pave the way for a better future for our children.

We encourage state and federal officials to... adopt the principles of rehabilitation and probation for most forms of victimless crimes, require financial restitution and community service in lieu of prison time and focus on performance-based funding for local support programs.

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