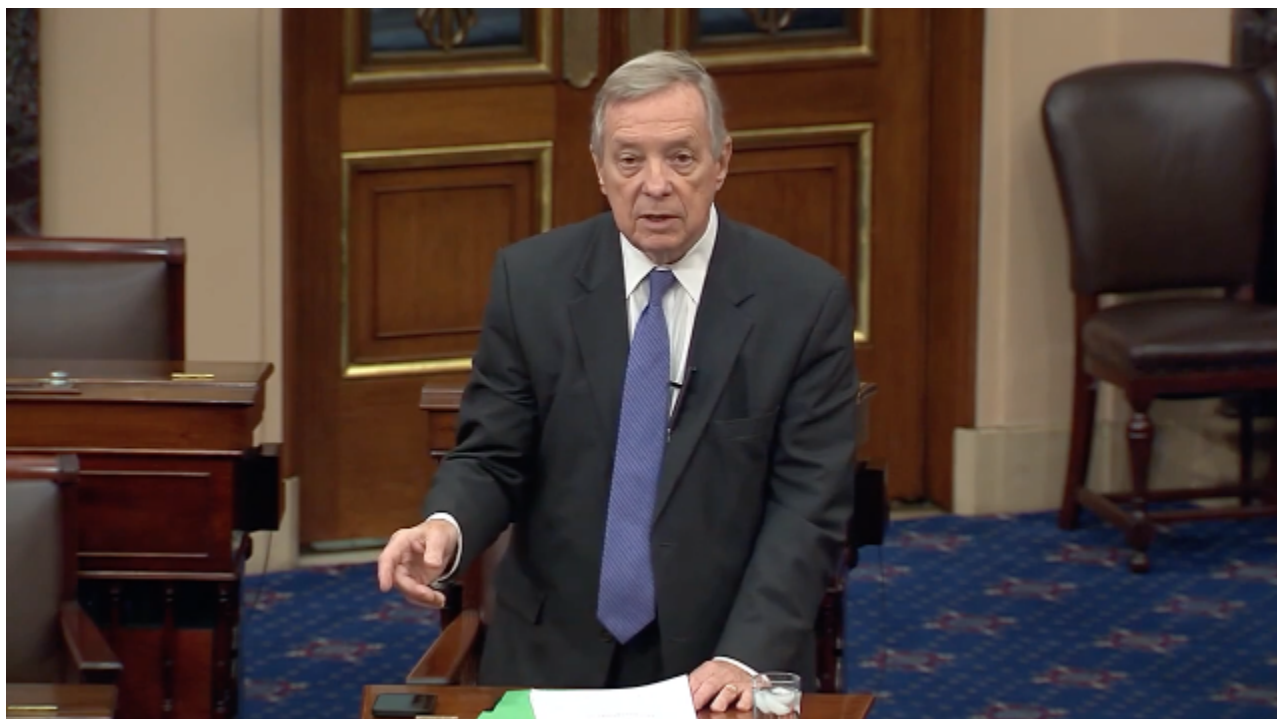


Durbin Marks Fifth Anniversary Of First Step Act By Meeting With Formerly Incarcerated Members Of Famm

December 6 2023 9:29 AM



WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, along with U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), Chair of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice and Counterterrorism, today met with members of FAMM, including more than 20 individuals impacted by the *First Step Act* ahead of the legislation’s fifth anniversary. During the meeting, Durbin heard stories from formerly incarcerated individuals about how the *First Step Act* impacted their experience with the criminal justice system. Durbin also reiterated his commitment to ensuring that the *First Step Act* is properly implemented and that incarcerated individuals are afforded the reforms, programs, and assistance laid out for them in the legislation.

“Five years ago, Congress came together to pass the *First Step Act*, the most important criminal justice reform legislation in a generation. Today, I was able to mark this momentous anniversary by meeting with formerly incarcerated individuals and other members of FAMM, who share my goal of improving our system of justice,” said Durbin. “The success of the overwhelming majority of individuals released under the *First Step Act* demonstrates that reducing the population in our overcrowded prisons can be done safely and effectively. It is, however, just the first step. To keep making our justice system fairer and our communities safer, we must continue reforming our outdated sentencing laws and providing opportunities for those who are incarcerated to reenter society successfully.”

Photos of the meeting are available [here](#).

In 2010, President Obama signed into law Durbin’s *Fair Sentencing Act*, which lowered the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine from 100:1 to 18:1.

In 2018, President Trump signed into law Durbin’s landmark bipartisan *First Step Act*, which made the *Fair Sentencing Act*’s reforms retroactive. Most notably, the *First Step Act* required the Department of Justice to develop a risk and needs assessment system requiring the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to assess the recidivism risk of all prisoners, place them in programs and activities to reduce risk, and permit early transition into prerelease custody based on earned time credits; reduced mandatory minimum sentences for some drug trafficking offenses; expanded the safety valve to allow judges to sentence low-level, nonviolent drug offenders with minor criminal histories to less than the required mandatory minimums; and authorized incarcerated individuals to file compassionate release motions in federal court.

These reforms have been tremendously successful. Of the 29,944 incarcerated adults released under *First Step Act* reforms through January 2023, only 12.4 percent have been arrested for new crimes. By comparison, the overall BOP recidivism rate currently stands at around 43 percent. To date, there have been 3,980 retroactive sentence reductions and 4,639 compassionate release motions granted.

Continuing his efforts to improve the criminal justice system, Durbin has introduced the [Safer Detention Act](#), which would further expand the Elderly Home Detention Pilot Program and compassionate release; the [Prohibiting Punishment of Acquitted Conduct Act](#), which would end the unjust practice of judges increasing sentences based on conduct for which a defendant has been acquitted; and the [First Step Implementation Act](#), which would further advance the goals of the *First Step Act*, including by allowing courts to retroactively apply *First Step Act* sentencing reforms.