



ULSTER COUNTY NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Creation Of Local Re-Entry Task Force

Each year, approximately 26,000 men and women are released from prisons and return to local communities. Unfortunately, approximately 76 percent of the prisoners across the nation return to undesirable behavior.

In an effort to insure that services are being coordinated and offered that will allow offenders to transition back into society as productive individuals, the Ulster County Legislature has passed a resolution to authorize Chairman David B. Donaldson to appointment citizens to a local re-entry task force to combat recidivism.

Donaldson has appointed Legislator Leonard M. Distel, D-Ellenville, to chair the task force. “Although we may not be able to address the national trend, we will address it in our little part of the nation with a local re-entry task force of professionals in the field,” Donaldson said. “It will be chaired by someone who knows the trend too well, retired Correction Officer Legislator Lenny Distel.”

The professionals on the task force, from within government as well as outside organizations, are individuals who are familiar with re-entry issues and are already offering assistance in varying capacities. The task force will insure services are being coordinated, gaps are being addressed and provide an avenue for pursuing available grant monies to implement re-entry initiatives. Donaldson addressed the issue of

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recidivism in his State of the County address last week. “Most prisoners are doing life on the installment plan,” he said. “This fuels the idea that we need bigger and more places to incarcerate. It wastes time, money and human talent.”

Donaldson credited community activist Ronnie Wade for his tireless work in bringing attention to the issue. “Ronnie has won the attention of the District Attorney, various judges and the Ulster County Legislature to work toward reducing that trend,” Donaldson said.

Distel said most prisoners aren't prepared for life outside of prison when they're released. Many offenders have trouble obtaining housing, securing employment, accessing treatment service and reuniting with their families. “Inmates who have been in prison for 25 years all of a sudden are released by the Parole Board and they have never given a thought about what they're going to do when they're released,” Distel said. “They find that everything has changed. We want to help those who are tired of doing it the old way and want to move on and lead a productive life.”

Research has shown that ex-prisoners who are employed, sober and are in a stable living environment and moving toward self-sufficiency have a greater chance of not committing further crimes.

The task force will be comprised of representatives from the regional and area Parole Office, local VESID Office, the Sheriff's Office, the local One Stop Center (DOL), Kingston Police Department, OASAS Field Office, the Victim Advocacy Organization, Mental Health, Probation, Social Services, Faith Based Community Organization, the Housing Consortium and members of the Ulster County Legislature.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact this office at: (845) 340-3900.