



December 27, 2016

A Salute to Rev. John Crawford

On Monday, December 15, 2016, one of Rev John Crawford's fights for returning citizens became law when the governor signed a bill into law that will provide a state ID for those returning home from a state prison.

Rev. John Crawford, who started F.A.I.T.H. in the early 1990s to assist returning citizens coming home from incarceration, said he started to pressure lawmakers more than a decade ago to draw up legislation to remove barriers for those returning home, including the provision of a fully valid ID card. Illinois is better because of Rev. Crawford's fight for justice.

With recidivism rates for Illinois ex-convicts over 45 percent, I was a Chief Sponsor of legislation that would allow inmates released from an Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC) or Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) detention center to receive a state ID card, free of charge. Currently, a temporary 30 day ID is issued to returning citizens, but most employers do not accept the temporary IDOC ID as a legitimate form of ID for hiring purposes. The lack of regular government-issued ID can be a huge determining factor in the potential for an ex-offender to do something that would return them to prison. An ID is especially important in the first month back in society where many people are in search of stable jobs.

Senate Bill 3368, now Public Act 99-0907, requires the Secretary of State to issue a standard Illinois ID card, at the time of their release, to any person being released from the DOC or DJJ who present their birth certificate, social security card, or other documents authorized by the Secretary, and two proofs of address. For individuals without these documents, the Secretary of State will issue a limited-term, 90-day ID to released individuals who present a verified document from DOC/DJJ with their name, birth date, social security number, and proof of address. They then have 90 days to present this ID at the Secretary of State to receive a standard issue ID.

For me, it was a great day to stand with the governor - even with an ongoing budget battle between the two branches of government - to have a significant piece of legislation signed into law. A statement by the governor stated, "In order to combat recidivism, we need to remove some of the hurdles offenders face when they are released from a detention facility and begin to re-integrate into society. In this case, it's the simple step of providing an offender with a state ID. We thank the bill sponsors for their work on this bipartisan legislation and Secretary of State White for his commitment to implement the new law.

This will help us end the cycle of recidivism and give former offenders more tools necessary to be successful and thrive and gets Illinois one step closer to safely reducing Illinois' prison population by 25 percent before 2025." The new law will take effect on July 1, 2017.

Providing a means for those leaving prison to receive a state ID from the Secretary of State is a luxury that many people cannot afford due to their inability to provide the needed identification information or the necessary funds needed to secure a state issued ID card. Every time an individual returns to prison, it costs us as a state and as a society. Each incident of recidivism in Illinois costs about \$118,000, \$40,000 of which is directly funded by taxpayer dollars. By providing returning citizens with real identification, they are able to have one less hurdle in a job-finding process, which is already extremely complicated for people with criminal backgrounds. It is in everyone's best interest that these men and women can take a step toward playing functional roles in our communities, and we need to remember and give credit to Rev. John Crawford for his push on this and many other issues of importance to returning citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District