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## State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections

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### **Corrections Secretary Rick Raemisch Column: Wisconsin Implements Smart, Efficient Criminal Justice Reforms**

At the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, we work to keep Wisconsin safe. We carry this mission out through the safe and effective management of inmates in our prison system, of offenders under community supervision, and of youths who are in our juvenile correctional system.

On October 1, a number of criminal justice and sentencing reforms took effect in Wisconsin. You won't see a dramatic shift overnight at Corrections, but you will see changes in the coming months. And at the DOC, we've been working very hard to make sure these changes happen in a smart, safe and gradual way.

I am confident these reforms will make us a national leader of what works in corrections, of how systems can hold offenders accountable, refocus resources, lower recidivism, and make communities safer at the same time. In recent months, several national studies have been published, demonstrating that strong community corrections, evidence-based treatment and other carrot-over-stick approaches can enhance community safety in states that move in this direction.

In Wisconsin, some of the new strategies include Positive Adjustment Time, in which eligible inmates have the opportunity to "earn" through good behavior the possibility – not the guarantee – of an early release into extended supervision, as subject to several layers of review, including the sentencing court. Another strategy is the expansion of the Earned Release and Challenge Incarceration Programs, which will help the DOC meet judicial demand for these effective treatment programs beyond just alcohol and drug programming. Another example is the Risk Reduction Sentence, which gives judges a new tool at the time of sentencing to ensure offenders are held accountable and provided incentive for making positive changes.

While realizing cost savings is certainly an important end goal, especially during these tough economic times, the reforms are reflective of a major shift in corrections and criminal justice policy that is sweeping the country. In fact, Wisconsin is one of more than 40 states that are making reforms to address sentencing disparities, to find safe alternatives to prison as a sanction, to advance evidence-based practices, and to deal with other challenges.

As a former Detective, Sheriff and Prosecutor, I will not support a policy that would make Wisconsin less safe, nor would Governor Doyle, who as a former Attorney General and District Attorney has dedicated much of his career to making Wisconsin safer for families and communities.

These policies continue to bring Wisconsin along the path of smart, effective corrections and criminal justice reforms that will increase public safety and result in stronger communities in the long run.

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