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Newly Enacted Senate Bill 337 to Reform Juvenile Justice Procedures

By Jenna Gant | August 8, 2012



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Governor John Kasich recently signed a bill into law that will make it easier for people who get into trouble to turn their lives around.

The sweeping legislation is designed to ease the side effects of criminal conviction and help non-violent ex-offenders reenter the workforce. Some of the bill's lesser-known provisions specifically are designed to help juvenile offenders.

Mahoning County Juvenile Court Judge Theresa Dellick said she supported the enactment of Senate Bill 337 because it will help teens integrate back into society.

Judge Dellick said the public was somehow getting access to expunged records and preventing some teens from college, employment and housing opportunities.

“Most people think your juvenile record disappears once you become an adult. Well, we found out it doesn’t,” Judge Dellick said.

Judge Dellick said that under the new law records can now be expunged after 6 months instead of 2 years except in cases involving murder, attempted murder, or rape. The bill will expand judicial authority to seal the records of certain sex crimes.

The law also will help young offenders gain employment and other opportunities after they are released from prison by eliminating certain restrictions and limitations for those with misdemeanor and felony convictions.

“Juveniles aren’t convicted of crimes, they are found to be delinquent,” Judge Dellick said. “So if they were asked ‘have you ever been convicted of a crime?’ they’ve never been convicted of robbery, receiving stolen property or even a curfew because all that has ever happened is that we find that they are delinquent.”

Senate Bill 337 also allows young adults up to age 21 to stay in juvenile confinement instead of being detained with adult criminals and gives teens credit for time served. Through the bill, the Department of Youth Services will establish minimum training standards for juvenile offender probation officers.

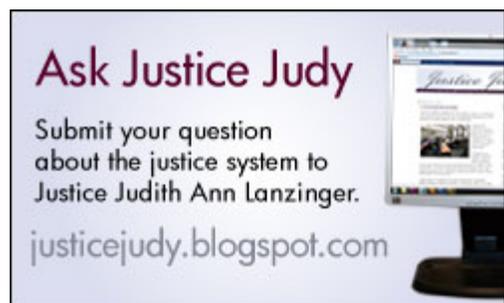
Judge Dellick said the bill will help give young offenders a chance to rebuild their lives once they are released from prison.

Some of the bill’s provisions that apply to adult offenders include:

- Expands offenders' ability to apply to have their criminal records sealed to one felony conviction and one misdemeanor conviction, or two misdemeanors.
- Reduces the penalties for driving with a suspended license when that offense is not a central factor in the crime and allows the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles to create a repayment plan for license reinstatement fees.
- Allows courts to grant limited driving privileges when a license is suspended because of violating a child support order.
- Allows judges to consider a parent's incarceration when determining earning capacity for child support.
- Prohibits the Board of Cosmetology from denying a license based on prior conviction.
- Decreases the penalty for use or possession of marijuana paraphernalia to a minor misdemeanor.

Senate Bill 337 takes effect on September 17.

View the complete text of [Senate Bill 337](#).





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