

THE ASSOCIATION OF THE BAR  
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Honorable Sheldon Silver  
Speaker of the Assembly  
932 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Speaker Silver:

On behalf of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, I am writing to urge your support for major reform of New York's Rockefeller and predicate felony drug laws.

Because of these laws, our prisons now confine over 22,300 drug offenders, the vast majority of whom are low-level criminals with no violence in their background. It costs taxpayers over \$715 million a year to imprison these offenders. General Barry R. McCaffrey, Director of the Office of National Drug Policy, as well as many judges, religious leaders, law enforcement officials and editorial boards have joined a growing chorus of voices advocating reform of our these laws.

With the approach of the new legislative session, the Association urges you to publicly support reform of the Rockefeller and predicate felony drug laws, and specifically to:

- Restore sentencing discretion to trial judges in most or all drug cases;
- Make any sentencing change enacted retroactive, at least for the cases where people have received the harshest penalty of 15 years to life;
- Reduce the minimum prison term for lower level drug-related offenses to allow for rational sentencing by judges; and
- Expand funding for alternatives to incarceration, including drug treatment, so that when judges decide not to imprison an offender, they have an appropriate place to send that person.

The greater use of drug treatment and the reduced use of prison for non-violent, low-level drug offenders would lead to a more balanced criminal justice system and a safer, more just society. We look forward to working with you to craft legislation to accomplish these objectives.

Very truly yours,



Michael A. Cooper