



STATE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE NEWS

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Wyoming passes a juvenile life without parole law, Missouri Senate passes Jonathan's Law, Georgia reform bill moving through the General Assembly; and Florida releases executive budget

On Feb. 14, 2013, the **Wyoming** legislature passed [HB 23](#) ending sentences of life in prison without parole for juvenile offenders. The law responds to a 2012 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Miller v. Alabama*, which ruled that imposing mandatory life sentences without the possibility of parole on juveniles is unconstitutional. Under the new Wyoming law, which takes effect on July 1, 2013, youth who are convicted of first degree murder will be eligible for parole after 25 years or can have their sentences commuted to a different term. Prior to the law's passage, juveniles in Wyoming convicted of murder could be given sentences of life with or without parole. The law will not apply retroactively to individuals already serving juvenile life without parole sentences, according to Deputy Attorney General Dave Delicath.

In **Missouri**, the Senate passed [SB 36](#), also known as "Jonathan's Law." Currently in Missouri, the dual jurisdiction program allows youth who are certified as adults to remain in the custody of the Department of Youth Services (DYS) to receive rehabilitation services and potentially avoid a further adult sentence. Jonathan's law extends the timeframe by six months in which

youth are eligible for the program. The bill also states that judges should consider the dual jurisdiction program when sentencing juveniles. Jonathan's Law is in remembrance of Jonathan McClard, who committed suicide in an adult facility at the age of 17, fearing he would be sentenced to a long prison term with adults. Senate Bill 36 was sent to the House on March 7, 2013.

For the last five years, **Georgia** policymakers have been considering reforms to their juvenile justice system. During the 2012 session, [HB 641](#) was approved by the House but held so that its fiscal impact could be studied. The review was conducted last fall by the Special Council on Criminal Justice Reform for Georgians and their findings were published in their [December 2012 report](#). According to the report, the changes are projected to decrease the average daily secure detention population of juvenile facilities from 1,908 to 1,269 youths. Every young person housed in these facilities costs Georgians \$90,000 per year. Over the next five years, it is projected that these and related measures will save \$88 million.



The Forum for America's Ideas

National Conference of State Legislatures

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STATE POLICY (CONT.)

Combining past bills and the Council’s recommendations, this year [HB 242](#) has passed the House and the Senate and has been sent to the Governor. Provisions of the bill include: prohibiting status offenders and misdemeanants to residential commitments, using risk and needs assessments for young offenders to identify which detention possibilities might be the best; and using performance-based contracting with service providers.

Florida Governor Rick Scott recently released his executive budget for 2013–2014, entitled “[Florida Families First](#),” which includes provisions that promote safety and reform in juvenile justice. The budget includes \$513.6 million for

the Department of Juvenile Justice, to help the agency focus on prevention, diversion, and alternatives to secure detention. Highlights of the budget include investing \$1.5 million in services to prevent and divert youth from entering the juvenile justice system. The budget also includes funds to address some of the mental health needs of youth and to provide educational services specifically for the unique needs of girls in the juvenile justice system. Florida’s Department of Juvenile Justice Secretary Wansley Walters says “This is a major step toward making sure we deliver the right service to the right youth at the right time. Not only are we helping at-risk youth get back on track, we are protecting Florida’s communities and saving money.”

ON THE FISCAL FRONT

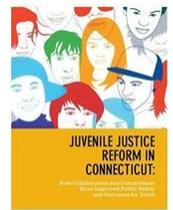
Connecticut sees improved outcomes for youth

A February 2013 [report](#), *Juvenile Justice Reform In Connecticut: How Collaboration and Commitment Have Improved Public Safety and Outcomes for Youth*, released by the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), details Connecticut’s success with juvenile justice policies over the past 20 years. The report identifies Connecticut’s seven major accomplishments, which includes decreasing their juvenile detention populations, increasing use of community based programs and keeping juveniles out of adult facilities; all resulting in cost savings.

According to the report, Connecticut’s increased investment in evidence-based treatment programs was key to improving their juvenile justice system; the state’s investment jumped from \$300,000 in 2000 to \$39 million in 2009. In 2012, 1,600 juveniles participated in these family and behavioral therapy programs. Thousands of children in the state’s custody, welfare and mental health systems also received treatment from evidence-based programs.

With the increased use of community-based programs, commitments to Connecticut’s juvenile residential facilities decreased. In fact, the state reduced commitments by 70 percent, from 680 to 216, between 2000 and 2011. Also, the average daily population for juveniles detained before trial fell from 132 to 94 between 2006 and 2011. These reductions occurred even after Connecticut legislation raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to bring 16-year-olds into the juvenile system. The report found that the two agencies administering the state’s juvenile justice system, the Department of Children and Families and the Judicial Branch’s Court Support Services Division, spent \$2 million less in the 2011–12 fiscal year than they had a decade earlier.

“The reforms in Connecticut’s juvenile justice system could not have occurred without the collaboration among legislators, the juvenile justice agencies, judges, advocates, providers and families,” said State Representative Toni Walker. “We are now experiencing better outcomes for our children and their families at no additional cost to taxpayers and without risk to public safety. I hope Connecticut’s success will inspire other states to take on juvenile justice reform.”



FEDERAL NEWS

President Obama appointed Robert Listenbee Jr. to become the administrator of the Federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), within the Office of Justice Programs in the U.S. Department of Justice. Listenbee, currently chief of the Juvenile Unit at the Defenders Association of Philadelphia, will become the first permanent administrator since President Obama took office in 2008. He also has the distinction of being the first defense attorney and the first African-American to lead the federal office. For his leadership in reforming the juvenile justice system in Pennsylvania, the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change initiative honored Listenbee with a Champion for Change award in 2011.

In an [interview](#) with the Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, Listenbee said, "The most important thing that kids really want when they come to court, is they want to be treated fairly. They want to have quality representation, and they want to make sure they are not being treated any differently than any other children that come into the system. Also, parents and guardians of children who come into our system really want someone to communicate with them and talk about issues and concerns that they have about their children going into the juvenile justice system."

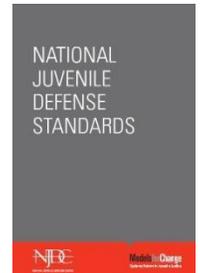


OTHER JUVENILE JUSTICE PUBLICATIONS

National Juvenile Defender Center

[National Juvenile Defense Standards](#)

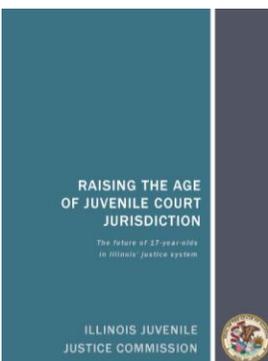
In February 2013, the [National Juvenile Defender Center](#) published the 162-page [National Juvenile Defense Standards](#), which lays out the ethical obligations, training requirements, communications needs and best practices for defending minors in criminal cases. The *Standards* presents a national approach to ensuring a competent and diligent defense practice in juvenile courts, and offers a framework for representation that is based on the law, science and professional codes of responsibility.



The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission

[Raising the Age of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction](#)

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission recently published [Raising the Age of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction](#), documenting how Illinois ended the automatic prosecution of all 17-year-olds charged with misdemeanors. In the [report's summary](#), the Commission found that raising the age is "consistent with legal trends, is consistent with adolescent development and behavior, and is an efficient use of juvenile court resources."



MARK YOUR CALENDARS



Juvenile Justice Webinar

“Juvenile Life Without Parole: Miller v. Alabama—States Respond”

Join us for the NCSL webinar, “Juvenile Life Without Parole: *Miller v. Alabama*—States Respond” on Friday April 12, 2013, at 2 p.m. ET; 1 p.m. CT; Noon MT; 11:00 a.m. PT. Hear experts discuss the case, its implications for state policy and actions that address the issue. More information and registration is [available online](#).

2013 Legislative Summit in Atlanta, Ga.

[Join us](#) in Atlanta, Aug. 12–15, 2013, as the nation’s legislators and staff gather for the 2013 NCSL Legislative Summit. The Summit gives you the best value – speakers, training, resources, experts, events and more – in the shortest time anywhere. The meeting, structured around the needs of legislators and legislative staff, will be your only opportunity this year to share experiences and learn together with many legislative colleagues from across the nation.



Technical Assistance

NCSL Juvenile Justice staff are available to visit your legislature in 2013 to provide testimony or other technical assistance on a variety of juvenile justice issues. Please contact: Sarah Brown, (303) 364–7700 ext. 1361 or at sarah.brown@ncsl.org.

NOTE: Links to external websites and reports are for information purposes only and do not indicate NCSL’s endorsement of the content on those sites.

This newsletter is prepared under a partnership project of NCSL’s Criminal Justice Program in Denver, Colo., and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in Chicago, Ill. The NCSL project is designed to help states tap the best research and information available to put a lens to juvenile justice policy options and reforms.