

House Republican Press Release

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REP. RYAN DISMAYED AT DEFEAT OF THREE STRIKES



*“Majority of Judiciary Committee Rejects Tough
“Three Strikes” Proposal Against Repeat Violent
Offenders”*

TODAY IN HARTFORD- Representative John J. Ryan, R-141 was disheartened with the defeat of “persistent offender” legislation that would require three-time dangerous felons to serve life in prison without the possibility of release.

House Bill 5915: *An Act Concerning Persistent Dangerous Felony Offenders*, would upon a person’s third conviction of specific most violent felonies, that person should spend the remainder of his or her life in prison. Currently, the judge may choose a sentence up to sixty years in prison if a person is convicted as a persistent dangerous felony offender. The bill was voted down 16-25 in the Judiciary Committee with only three Democrats voting for the legislation.

“When criminals are convicted by a jury of their peers beyond a reasonable doubt for a third violent crime, it is time to say ‘enough is enough’ and put them behind bars for life to prevent them from terrorizing, maiming or killing again,” said Rep. John Ryan.

“The public is losing patience with legislative indifference to repeat hard-core criminals who should be off the streets,” Ryan said.

The bill would have said that if a person is eligible to be charged as a persistent dangerous felony offender, and the prosecutor chooses not to charge that person as such, the prosecutor must state in open the court the reason for not bringing the charge. Right now, prosecutors have the discretion to decide whether to charge a person as a persistent offender, and we have heard through previous public hearing testimony that often times they are deciding not to bring this charge.

Earlier this year the Department of Correction identified 265 incarcerated persons who were eligible for an enhanced sentence under the Persistent Dangerous Felony Offender statute but were never charged as such. These 265 people are currently serving sentences ranging from seven months to sixty years. None of these persons are serving life sentences without the possibility of release.

“Repeat violent offenders are hardened criminals who are almost certain to offend again if allowed back on the streets,” added Rep. Ryan.

“Gov. Rell is absolutely correct that we should be concerned about the safety of our citizens, and that this topic need action now,” concluded Rep. Ryan.