

proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

UNITED STATES PAROLE COMMISSION EXTENSION ACT OF 2008

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 3294) to provide for the continued performance of the functions of the United States Parole Commission.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 3294

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "United States Parole Commission Extension Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. AMENDMENT OF SENTENCING REFORM ACT OF 1984.

For purposes of section 235(b) of the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 (18 U.S.C. 3551 note; Public Law 98-473; 98 Stat. 2032), as such section relates to chapter 311 of title 18, United States Code, and the United States Parole Commission, each reference in such section to "21 years" or "21-year period" shall be deemed a reference to "24 years" or "24-year period", respectively.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) and the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, S. 3294, the United States Parole Commission Extension Act of 2008, would authorize the United States Parole Commission for another 3 years.

Under the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984, criminal defendants sentenced for Federal offenses committed on or after November 1, 1987 serve determinate terms and are not eligible for patrol.

Since the elimination of Federal parole in 1987, the Parole Commission has been reauthorized on four prior occasions. Current reauthorization is set to expire October 31, 2008.

The Commission has jurisdiction over Federal offenders sentenced before November 1, 1987, as well as DC offenders sentenced before August 4, 2000. The Commission also has jurisdiction over an increasing number of DC offenders on supervised release.

Should the Commission not be reauthorized, the Department of Justice is

concerned that Federal inmates who were sentenced prior to 1987 will begin to file motions for release under the Sentencing Reform Act. This act requires inmates sentenced before 1987 to be given release dates 3 to 6 months prior to the Commission's expiration. This is why it's imperative that Congress act immediately to reauthorize the Parole Commission.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself so much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 3294, the United States Parole Commission Extension Act of 2008.

This bipartisan legislation will extend the authorization of the United States Parole Commission for an additional 3 years.

Judiciary Committee Chairman JOHN CONYERS and Ranking Member LAMAR SMITH introduced the House version of this bill earlier this month. Crime Subcommittee Chairman BOBBY SCOTT and Ranking Member LOUIE GOHMERT also joined as cosponsors.

The Parole Commission is an independent agency within the Department of Justice that has the responsibility of supervising Federal offenders that are eligible for parole. The Parole Commission also has jurisdiction over offenders from the District of Columbia who are parole-eligible and those convicted under current DC law, under which they cannot be paroled.

Today, the great majority of the Commission's workload concerns the District of Columbia offenders. That's because the group of offenders that the Commission was originally intended to supervise—Federal offenders that are eligible for parole—are a small category of prisoners getting smaller every day. This decrease in the number of parole-eligible Federal offenders is the result of a decision by Congress to end indeterminate sentencing, and therefore Federal parole, with the passage of the Sentencing Reform Act, or SRA, of 1984.

As a result of the SRA, the arbitrary and disparate sentences imposed by judges under the old system were replaced with determinate sentences mandated by strong guidelines created by the U.S. Sentencing Commission. This new Federal sentencing arrangement has been an unquestioned success. Determinate sentencing makes incarceration terms more meaningful and ensures that offenders actually serve most of their sentences. Determinate sentencing also helped to restore the credibility of courts by making sentencing more uniform.

Over the last 25 years the national crime rate has dropped. This decrease in crime can be attributed to determinate sentencing, which keeps the violent criminals in prison and off the streets, and it also provides a deterrent.

In an effort to lower local crime rates, the District of Columbia fol-

lowed the Federal example and abolished parole. Under the new DC system, the DC Superior Court imposes a term of incarceration and supervised release, and the Parole Commission enforces the conditions of the supervised release.

Like the population of Federal offenders eligible for parole, the parole-eligible DC offender population is declining over time, although at a slower rate than Federal offenders.

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However, because all incoming offenders are now sentenced under the new law, the DC supervised release offender population is increasing over time.

The Department of Justice has indicated that it will evaluate the future of the commission during the 3-year reauthorization period. The department will review whether any changes to the commission are necessary to reflect its decreasing Federal parole responsibilities and its evolving supervised release responsibilities for the District of Columbia. These changes may include transferring all or some of the commission's functions to an entity or entities inside or outside the Department of Justice.

We hope the department will share the results of this review with Congress as it will help the legislature make an informed decision about the future status of the U.S. Parole Commission.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 3294.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

DRUG TRAFFICKING VESSEL INTERDICTION ACT OF 2008

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6295) to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit operation by any means or embarking in any submersible or semi-submersible vessel that is without nationality and that is navigating or has navigated into, through or from waters beyond the