

## House Republican Press Release

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### Toughening the Law for Repeat Offenders



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A home invasion in Cheshire over the summer claimed the lives of a mother and her two young girls, left a husband and father grieving, and a community demanding answers. The perpetrators who are charged with the crimes had long criminal histories and had been released on parole. Neither had what anyone considered to be a “violent” crime in their background in that they had never assaulted or murdered anyone prior to the Cheshire incident.

Questions have been raised about the incomplete record that the Parole Board received prior to making the decision to grant these men parole, and not having the sentencing transcripts available to them prior to making their decision. If things had been different with the Parole Board, it might have made a difference and prevented this tragedy.

This case does, however, bring to light a number of other holes in the criminal justice system in Connecticut that the legislature should address immediately. This is why House Republicans have called for a special session of the House and Senate to implement a series of reforms aimed at toughening sentences for the most serious offenders in Connecticut.

Our aim is to strengthen Connecticut’s persistent offender laws, reclassify burglary of a home as a violent crime, implement an effective ‘Three Strikes’ law that mandates life imprisonment for a third conviction for a violent crime, and makes needed changes to the parole process. We would require that dangerous felons serve at least 85% of their sentences, a mandatory five-year sentence for those who commit burglary in the first and second degrees, and require serious offenders to wear global positioning devices as a term of their release.

Earlier this month, the State Supreme Court ruled in a case involving a lifetime criminal named Arnold Bell, who was convicted in the shooting of a New Haven police officer. Prior to that, he had repeated felony convictions. The Court decided that the jury, not the judge, has the power to decide what sentence Bell receives, highlighting one of the critical areas where Connecticut law needs reform.

It is because of the way Connecticut law is written that sentences in this state have been lenient for repeat offenders, and career criminals have received early parole. These laws need to be re-written.

We have called for a special session no later than October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The time for us to act is now.