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Florida Politics

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Bush backing criminal justice reforms

By Kathleen Haughney September 2, 2011 10:20 AM

TALLAHASSEE -- Former Gov. **Jeb Bush** is signing on as a supporter of prison reforms that could include more treatment-based approaches for offenders over the traditional lock-them-up style that the state has used in the past.

Bush signed the "Right on Crime" statement of principles, the Center for Effective Justice at the Texas Public Policy Foundation announced Friday morning. The center is advocating for treatment and incentive programs as a way to rehabilitate offenders and still keep the public safe.

Florida began looking at a Texas-style method of criminal justice reform this past winter. In January, Texas state Rep. **Jerry Madden**, R-Piango, testified before a Florida Senate committee about some of the reforms that Texas had enacted over the past few years, which included better re-entry programs and rehabilitation diversion programs.

Florida already uses drug courts and faith-based prisons as part of its sentencing structure, but other possibilities raised in the past include lessening drug penalties and more diversion programs related to mental health treatment.

The suggestions went nowhere during the 2011 legislative session, with some lawmakers reluctant to look soft on crime. But it did have one strong advocate, former Department of Corrections Secretary **Ed Buss**. Buss was recently forced to resign by the Scott administration last month and has been replaced by Assistant Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner **Ken Tucker**.

Categories: None

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About the author



WILLIAM E. GIBSON, the Sun Sentinel's Washington correspondent for 27 years, has covered seven presidential elections and 14 sessions of Congress, always with South Florida readers in mind.

Originally from the Kansas City area, he lived in New Mexico, New York and Fort Lauderdale before moving to Washington. Along the way, he studied journalism at the University of Kansas and Columbia University.

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