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Immediate Release

Council of State Governments Establishes “Justice Center”

Phoenix— The Council of State Governments (CSG) announced today the creation of its Justice Center—a national resource center on criminal justice policy. CSG President and Vt. Gov. Jim Douglas joined the organization’s Governing Board in voting to transform the Eastern Regional Conference’s Criminal Justice Program into a new center that will continue to develop nonpartisan, consensus-driven strategies to address complex public safety problems. These strategies will be grounded in research and make efficient use of state and local resources.

“I have seen the criminal justice program evolve from a small, regional initiative into a respected resource for leaders across the country,” said Douglas. “Elevating this program to create a national Justice Center positions it to serve all states that seek effective data-driven policies and programs—particularly those addressing problems at the intersection of the criminal justice system and other disciplines, such as public health.”

A charter group of senior-level state officials who shape criminal justice policy has been assembled to guide the 25-plus Justice Center staff until a similarly diverse board of directors has been named. They include state legislative leaders, judges, corrections administrators, juvenile justice agency directors, and law enforcement professionals.

“What distinguishes this center,” said Chair of the Justice Center Charter Group and Mass. State Rep. Mike Festa, “is its commitment to translate difficult concepts and research findings into language and recommendations that are bipartisan, practical and easily applied to policy and program design.”

The center will continue to coordinate projects on improving the response to people with mental illness in contact with the criminal justice system, addressing prisoner re-entry issues and promoting justice reinvestment strategies. It will also explore such issues as alcohol-related emergency room admissions and housing concerns as they relate to the justice system.

Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Presiding Judge Sharon Keller, the Charter Group Vice-Chair, added, “I am excited to be part of a group willing to take on some of the toughest criminal justice policy issues facing states. I know of no other group that has brought leaders and front-line professionals from such diverse disciplines and perspectives together to implement truly collaborative strategies.”

The Justice Center will have offices in New York City and Bethesda, Maryland. The center’s web site can be found at www.justicecenter.csg.org.

The Council of State Governments

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