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## CRIME AND LEGAL ISSUES NOTEBOOK

### Sen. Webb calling for major reform of criminal justice system

By Peter Dujardin and David Macaulay

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The normal political response to crime is a call to put more criminals away.

But Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., says it's time to face the reality that the approach isn't working — either in terms of cost to taxpayers or cutting crime.

He wants the justice system overhauled "from top to bottom" — from drug laws to the treatment of mentally ill inmates to job training programs for prisoners to how gangs are dealt with. Webb said this week that 34 senators have cosponsored his bill to create a 13-member national panel of experts to recommend comprehensive change. The bill will be voted on in the Senate Judiciary Committee next week.



The United States has 5 percent of the world's population, Webb says, but about a quarter of its prisoners. The U.S. inmate population has quadrupled in the past 25 years, to more than 2 million.

Still, fear of crime is only rising.

"We're locking up too many people whose transgressions could have been dealt with in more creative ways," Webb says. His bill has strong bipartisan support and counts William J. Bratton, former police commissioner in New York and police chief in Los Angeles, as a supporter. Groups as diverse as the Fraternal Order of Police, National District Attorneys Association, CATO Institute, the NAACP and American Civil Liberties Union are also on board.

#### Garfield teaches safety

The Virginia Attorney General's Office is teaming with what it calls "a grouchy, opinionated, lasagna-loving cat" to help teach children about online safety.

Garfield's creator, Jim Davis, and acting Attorney General Bill Mims have unveiled an interactive program that the Virginia Department of Education has begun offering to schools statewide.

"You wouldn't believe the number of moms, dads and teachers who've told me that Garfield was the

reason their child started reading and — gasp! — learning," Davis said. "Professor Garfield can teach students about Internet safety, tickling their brain and their funny bone."

Legendary film and television voice Frank Welker will serve as Garfield.

Two years ago, Virginia became the first state in the nation to mandate that all public schools teach Internet safety. The program is offered free at [www.InfiniteLearningLab.org](http://www.InfiniteLearningLab.org)

Peter Dujardin and Ashley Kelly cover the courts and crime for the Daily Press.

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