

Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council

Regular Meeting Minutes

July 18, 2025 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Michael A. Bilandic Building and Virtual

160 N La Salle St, Chicago, IL 60601. Room N502

Chicago, IL

Members Present in Person

Chairperson Cullerton, Scott Main, Marcia Meis, Elizabeth Leahy, Steven Fruth

Members Present by Video

Senator Elgie Sims, Christelle Perez, Latoya Hughes, Doug Harvath, Augie Torres, Don Stemen, Delrice Adams, Senator Steve McClure, Sharone Mitchell, Anne Chambers, Lisa Daniels, Chief Mitchell Davis, Jim Montgomery

Members Absent-

Ron Hain, Representative Justin Slaughter, Representative Patrick Windhorst, Julia Reitz

Non-Members Present in Person or by Video

Victoria Gonzalez, Mark Powers, John Specker, Michael Varrige, Laura Davis, Paula Wolff, Ben Ruddell, Declan Binninger, Skylar Waddington, Jayson Cayanan, Jose Sepulveda

Welcome, Introductions & Updates

Chairperson Cullerton called the forty-fifth regular meeting of the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council to order at 10:00 a.m. Chairperson Cullerton welcomed the members and staff of the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council along with members of the public. Chairperson Cullerton then reviewed the agenda stating that there would be a vote to appoint a new member followed by an Executive Director's report, then a presentation from SPAC's Policy Education Team, and finally a presentation about SPAC's race and ethnicity adjustment methodology. Chairperson Cullerton then asked SPAC's Executive Director Victoria Gonzalez to take the roll. With a quorum present, Chairperson Cullerton moved to the next agenda item.

Vote: Approval of the Minutes from the November 2024 Meeting

Chairperson Cullerton called for a motion to approve the minutes from SPAC's November 2024 Meeting. Councilmember Main moved to approve the minutes from the November 2024 meeting, Chairperson Cullerton seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Chairperson Cullerton then proceeded to the appointment of Judge Steven Fruth to the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council.

Vote to Appoint New Member

Chairperson Cullerton introduced Judge Steven Fruth to the Council. Judge Fruth talked about his background as a Judge and his role in the community. Councilmember Meis moved to approve the appointment of Judge Fruth to the Council. Councilmember Main seconded. Judge Fruth was unanimously approved to join the Council.

Executive Director's Report

Director Gonzalez's report included an update on SPAC's staffing, including that SPAC is in the process of hiring a senior policy advisor for the policy education team. Director Gonzalez then talked about the strategic plan progress and goals for the upcoming years. Director Gonzalez discussed the budget increase approved by the Legislature and the Governor. The budget was increased to \$1,000,000. Director Gonzalez also provided a preview of the schedule for the 2026 SPAC meetings (one in February/March, one in July/August, and one in October/November). She also discussed SPAC's new policy to comply with Public Act 103-657 (PA 103-657). PA 103-657 requires SPAC to study and identify discriminatory practices in sentencing.

Policy Education Team Presentation

Chairperson Cullerton introduced SPAC's Policy Education team, John Specker and Michael Varrige, to present SPAC's publications since the last SPAC meeting.

Mr. Specker updated the Council on SPAC's publications since the last meeting in November 2024. SPAC has published six Impact Analyses of proposed legislation including HB2764, HB3332, HB1241, HB2400, SB290, and HB2367. SPAC presented to the Senate Criminal Law committee about SPAC's work and the ways SPAC can be of assistance to the Legislature. SPAC also provided testimony during the House Judiciary Criminal committee Truth in Sentencing subject matter hearing.

Mr. Varrige gave an update on the documents that the Policy Education team has published since the last meeting in November 2024. The Policy Education Team published four 101's as part of SPAC's ongoing 101 Series including Sentence Credits 101, Truth in Sentencing 101, Controlled Substances 101, and Parole/Mandatory Supervised Release 101. The Policy Education Team also published the Public Acts Document for the Spring 2024 session of the 103rd General Assembly.

Chair Cullerton asked about the distribution methods of the impact analyses and how they are utilized by members of the General Assembly. Chairperson Cullerton asked how many 101's had been published in total and how they get shared to the Council. Mr. Specker answered that around ten 101's had been published. When the 101's are published, they are sent to the SPAC email distribution list and then posted to the website.

Race/Ethnicity Adjustment Methodology Presentation

Chairperson Cullerton introduced Executive Director Gonzalez and Research Director Mark Powers for their presentation about SPAC's race and ethnicity adjustment methodology. This presentation explores the complex relationship between race and ethnicity, and how collection of race and ethnicity data impacts the study of incarceration trends in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), with a focus on the Hispanic population. Director Gonzalez discussed how racial and ethnic classifications have evolved over time. Director Gonzalez highlighted that the Hispanic population has experienced changes in how it is categorized—historically being underreported or grouped inconsistently with racial categories. Mr. Powers followed by highlighting the difference in race and ethnicity collection between data reported to the Illinois State Police (ISP) Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) databased and data collected by IDOC. Hispanic was not an option for data submitted to CHRI but IDOC did have a Hispanic as an option. Mr. Powers discussed a 2015 law which mandated that Hispanic be added as an option for data submitted to CHRI. Mr. Powers also discussed ongoing problems that are faced when attempting to analyze trends in CHRI data where Hispanic was

not an option prior to 2015 as well as issues related to full implementation of that 2015 law. Mr. Powers discussed the methodology SPAC uses to address these problems which is called Bayesian Improved Surname Geocoding (BISG). SPAC uses this methodology for aggregate data to assign Hispanic as a race code to individuals who do not have an IDOC match to their State ID number and have White and/or Unknown as their race code in CHRI. Mr. Powers then showed different visuals and charts about the arrest disparities and how CHRI data looked before and after the BISG adjustments were made.

Chair Cullerton discussed the passage of traffic stop reporting requirement that requires police officers to report the race of the person they stopped. Mr. Powers responded that that data collection system is separate from CHRI and not included in this analysis. Mr. Powers clarified additional reporting requirements by the Federal Office of Management and Budget to require the collection of Middle Eastern and North African by 2029. Illinois may be ahead of the curve.

Councilmember Meis discussed the data taskforce established by the Illinois Supreme Court to collect pretrial data. She discussed the issues of case matching across the entire case. They discussed the State ID and how the State ID number works in the CHRI system. Mr. Powers confirmed that the State ID is consistent by individual, with some exceptions for bad fingerprints.

Chair Cullerton asked Director Gonzalez to discuss the National Association of Sentencing Commissions conference where SPAC will be presenting the race and ethnicity adjustment methodology as well.

Public Comment

ACLU Director of Criminal Justice Policy Ben Ruddell clarified a question Chairperson Cullerton had about a traffic stop study and he wanted to know who collected that data and if it was ever made permanent.

New Business

SPAC's 2025 meetings will take place on September 19, and November 21. Both at 10 am.

Adjournment

Councilmember Meis moved to adjourn. Councilmember Main seconded. Motion passed unanimously.