

Miami Herald

December 3, 2013

Reform minimum-mandatory sentencing

Since the 1980s, the war on drugs has resulted in stiff minimum mandatory sentences for drug traffickers caught with boatloads of drugs imported from foreign countries. Somehow the minimum mandatory drug trafficking sentences were amended to include as little as seven prescription pain pills. Somehow, someone addicted to pain medication after an injury was included in this web meant for big-time drug traffickers.

This has to stop. We cannot economically handle the drain on our society to prosecute and warehouse people who simply need drug treatment. These people — our sons, daughters, brothers and sisters — who suffer pain prescription drug medication addictions can more economically be counseled and treated as opposed to being warehoused in our prisons and labeled convicted felons.

State Rep. Katie Edwards, D-Plantation, Rep. Dave Hood, R-Daytona Beach, and Sen. Rob Bradley, R-Orange Park, have introduced legislation that raises the quantity of oxycodone and hydrocodone levels of various minimum-mandatory prison sentences. Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Shalimar, who is chair of the Criminal Justice Committee, has agreed to support this legislation, with conditions. Floridians should applaud these legislators for this display of courage and leadership.

Jamie Benjamin, president, Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Fort Lauderdale