

# Restore Justice Foundation

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://restorejustice.org/restore-justice-honors-sen-harmon-with-1st-abner-mikva-legislative-courage-award/>

## Public Facing Advocacy Writing

*Assistant Majority Leader Harmons Commitment to Justice, Compassion Make Illinois a Better State*

Tone Stockenstrom Photography Inc photos

CHICAGO On Thursday, Dec. 12, Restore Justice proudly honored Illinois State Senator Don Harmon with the first Abner Mikva Legislative Courage Award. Assistant Majority Leader Harmon sponsored the measures that introduced [new parole opportunities](#) in Illinois for the first time since 1978 and that [banned mandatory life without parole for juveniles](#).

Sen. Harmon was one of Restore Justices earliest legislative allies and he remains one of our fiercest champions. [Hon. Abner Mikva](#) served as a mentor to Sen. Harmon.

Hon. Mikvas tenacity proved legendary, and he brought his characteristic enthusiasm and determination to our effort to reform the Illinois criminal justice system. He led the charge to help men and women sentenced to life for crimes that occurred when they were just children. Hon. Mikva helped found Restore Justice, and he served as a judge, congressman, and instrumental advocate for fairness. Were thrilled to recognize Sen. Harmons advancement of Mikvas legacy.

On [Thursday afternoon at City Winery](#) in the West Loop, Mikvas good friend, Mickey Gaynor, presented Sen. Harmon with the award. Gaynor serves on the Restore Justice board. Hon. Mikvas daughter, Justice Mary Mikva, attended, as did other members of the Mikva family.

Sen. Harmon is the first recipient of the Abner Mikva Legislative Courage Award. The award will only be given when its earned. Sen. Harmon fought for HB 531, the measure that created parole opportunities for people under 21 entering the system with long sentences ahead of them. Illinois previously ended parole opportunities for all entering the system after 1978, so this legislation represents a crucial step forward in the journey for reform. Sen. Harmon fought year after year for the bill, despite tremendous pressure from prosecutors and colleagues. Because of his perseverance, and his belief in pursuing whats right, even when its difficult, that measure is now law.

Sen. Harmon is a leader in Abner Mikvas footsteps because he takes his role as a legislator as a responsibility to better civic life. He champions smart gun laws, and drives them to passage. Earlier this year, he garnered the support to pass a bill limiting cruel and inhumane immigration enforcement practices by local police. And, Sen. Harmon said yes when Hon. Mikva asked him to champion legislation that would help people who most legislators fear, people convicted of serious crimes. Sen. Harmon held on until the job was done. He then pushed forward in his constant effort to make Illinois a more compassionate, just state.

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*Restore Justice advocates for fairness, humanity, and compassion throughout the Illinois criminal justice system, with a primary focus on those affected by extreme sentences imposed on our youth. We create and support policies that allow those who are rehabilitated to go home, and that ensure those incarcerated, their families, and victim families have opportunities for healing and justice. We engage currently and formerly incarcerated individuals and their families, victims and their families, communities, and concerned Illinoisans in advocacy and service within the criminal justice system.*

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