

Push to end life sentences for juveniles

by UPI

CHICAGO -- Efforts are under way in Illinois to end a mandatory sentencing law that leaves certain juvenile murderers in prison for life without hope of parole. A coalition of human rights groups, defense lawyers and Illinois lawmakers are backing legislation that would prohibit mandatory life sentences for juveniles, The Washington Post reported Monday. In addition to ending the practice, the proposed legislation would also allow those who were sentenced to life as juveniles under the current law to have their sentencing reconsidered. Colorado banned mandatory sentencing of juveniles in 2006. Legislation ending the practice has also been introduced in Nebraska, Florida, Michigan and California. John Gorman, a spokesman for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, says many of these cases involve horrific crimes, almost half of them committed by 17-year-olds. Gorman says a youth would have to be convicted of multiple murders, the murder of a police officer or the murder of a child to be sentenced to life without parole under the current law.

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