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Reporter Jim Sanders
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Assembly rejects bill to allow parole for some young murderers

Hotly contested legislation that would have given some hope of eventual release to juvenile offenders sentenced to life without possibility of parole was rejected today by the Assembly.

Sen. **Leland Yee**, D-San Francisco, plans to bring [Senate Bill 9](#) before the Assembly again, perhaps with amendments, before the legislative year ends next month, said **Adam Keigwin**, his chief of staff.

The Assembly roll was called four times on SB 9 as supporters, including Speaker **John A. Pérez**, scrambled to line up the 41 votes required for passage. The final tally was 36-36, with Republicans opposed.

The bill would have allowed sentencing reconsideration for juveniles who were 16 or 17 years old when they committed their offense and had been incarcerated at least 15 years. Yee's bill targeted nearly 300 prisoners who were convicted of committing or assisting in a murder.

The legislation gave no assurance of parole, but it provided a process under which a court could consider release from prison after the juvenile offender had served at least 25 years. Under SB 9, the court could consider factors such as a juvenile's prior criminal history, whether the murder was committed with an adult co-defendant, and the offender's level of remorse and rehabilitation attempts, such as participation in educational or vocational efforts.

Assemblyman **Gil Cedillo**, D-Los Angeles, urged his colleagues to reject the notion of a one-size-fits-all criminal justice system that does not allow for the possibility that young offenders could make a grave mistake but turn their lives around during many years of incarceration.

"You either believe in redemption or you don't, it's that simple," Cedillo said.

Opponents countered that paroling murderers, even if they were juveniles when the crime was committed, would be a slap in the face to victims' families. They also argued that SB 9 is unnecessary because state law already allows victims to petition the governor for a pardon or commutation if circumstances demand a resentencing.