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## **Probation plan can bolster war on crime**

The money's in place. Now it's time for quick action by the courts to expand a program for offenders on probation, one that can keep many of them from lapsing more deeply into crime.

Lawmakers last session heard success stories for the program, piloted in 2004 by Circuit Court Judge Steven Alm, which keeps many of the offenders meeting the terms of probation and staying out of trouble. It's gratifying that they acted on those reports by allotting \$1.2 million for an expansion of the program, money that was released July 1 for use by the circuit courts on O'ahu.

The program works by giving immediate, brief jail terms to felons who violate the terms of their probation. The idea is that if offenders see that a positive drug test or a missed probation appointment lands them in jail, they may take the probation rules — and the legal system, in general — far more seriously.

Alm says that many of those "scared straight" in this way have corrected their behavior and have not reappeared in his courtroom.

The additional money will underwrite outpatient drug treatment and hiring of additional probation officers and social-service aides. The positions should be filled as soon as possible. This investment will pay off in lower spending on incarceration right away — and lower social costs for the long term.