

Louisiana Justice Reinvestment Task Force



The Need for Reform

Louisiana's corrections system is producing high costs and low public safety returns. The state spends nearly \$700 million annually on corrections, but one in three inmates released from prison in Louisiana returns within three years.

Louisiana leads the nation in imprisonment, with a rate nearly double the national average and significantly higher than the second- and third-highest states, Oklahoma and Alabama.

The Justice Reinvestment Task Force's recommendations would safely reduce Louisiana's prison population by 13% over the next 10 years, saving \$305 million and reinvesting \$154 million into programs that reduce recidivism and victimization. The recommendations would also reduce Louisiana's community supervision population by 16% over the next 10 years, reducing average caseload size for officers by 19%.

Why Louisiana Is #1 in Imprisonment

Louisiana sends people to prison for nonviolent offenses at 1.5 to 3 times the rate of neighboring Southern states with similar crime rates. Louisiana has a similar crime rate to South Carolina and Florida, for example, but Louisiana sends nonviolent offenders to prison at twice the rate of South Carolina and nearly three times the rate of Florida. **The top 10 crimes that were sentenced to prison in 2015 were all nonviolent, with drug possession topping the list.**

More than half of people admitted to prison in 2015 failed on probation or parole. Louisiana's probation and parole officers have an average caseload of 139 supervisees, making it difficult to provide quality, across-the-board oversight.

Additionally, Louisiana has a growing number of inmates serving very long sentences. Roughly 7,000 prisoners in Louisiana have already spent more than 10 years behind bars, an increase of more than 50% in the last decade.

A Proven Model for Success

In the last decade, a number of Louisiana's neighbors have enacted comprehensive criminal justice reform packages similar to the Task Force's proposals, and these reforms have already returned dividends to taxpayers many times over:

- Since passing reforms in 2010, **South Carolina** has seen its imprisonment rate fall by 16% and its crime rate fall by 16%.
- Since passing reforms in 2011, **North Carolina** has seen its imprisonment rate fall by 3% and its crime rate fall by 20%.
- Since passing reforms in 2012, **Georgia** has seen its imprisonment rate fall by 7% and its crime rate fall by 11%.
- Since passing reforms in 2014, **Mississippi** has averted all prison growth and seen a 6% reduction in its prison population, alongside continued declines in the crime rate.

The Louisiana Justice Reinvestment Task Force is a bipartisan, inter-branch group comprised of legislators, judges, attorneys from both defense and prosecution, law enforcement, the Corrections Secretary, and community and faith representatives.

Read the full Justice Reinvestment Task Force Report at www.doc.louisiana.gov/justice-reinvestment-task-force

Recommendations of the Louisiana Justice Reinvestment Task Force

Focus Prison Beds on Serious and Violent Offenders

- ◆ Revise drug penalties to target longer sentences on higher-level drug offenders.
- ◆ Consolidate laws on property crimes and raise the value threshold for felony charges.
- ◆ Distinguish penalties for weapons offenses by the severity of the underlying crime.
- ◆ Focus habitual offender penalties on the most serious crimes.
- ◆ Implement a felony class system to eliminate inconsistencies in sentencing.

SB 220
Alario

SB 221
Alario

Strengthen Community Supervision and Expand Parole Opportunities

- ◆ Streamline and simplify release processes.
- ◆ Expand eligibility for programs proven to reduce recidivism, including alternatives to incarceration and in-prison classes and treatment.
- ◆ Focus supervision resources on the period at which people are at the highest-risk to reoffend.
- ◆ Expand swift, certain, and proportional sanctions for violations of supervision.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for parole consideration to some of Louisiana's longest-serving inmates, including juveniles sentenced to life without parole, and those with severe medical needs.

SB 139
Martiny

SB 16
Claitor

Clear Away Barriers to Successful Reentry

- ◆ Tailor criminal justice financial obligations to a person's ability to pay, and modify penalties for failure to pay.
- ◆ Improve and streamline the victim notification process.
- ◆ Directs judges to consider incarceratory status when ordering child support.

HB 249
Magee

HB 116
Dwight

HB 426
Marino

- ◆ Eliminate the restriction for those with drug convictions from receiving food stamp benefits during their first year of release.

HB 177
Moreno

- ◆ Expand opportunities for those reentering the community to earn full occupational licenses.

HB 519
Emerson

Reinvest a Substantial Portion of the Savings

- ◆ Collect data to monitor the outcomes of reforms.
- ◆ Reinvest over \$154 million dollars into research-based programs that reduce recidivism and support victims.

HB 489
Leger