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Police and Prosecutors Urge Trump and Sessions to Join Bipartisan Movement for Criminal Justice Reform

Law enforcement group gathers in Washington to present alternative agenda on crime.


The Group hosting the summit, Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime and Incarceration, released an open letter and five-point policy plan this morning to President Trump and Attorney General Sessions, urging them to shift away from a “tough on crime” agenda. They urge them to, instead, join the current bipartisan movement for criminal justice reform that’s reemerging as a Congressional priority.

The Summit comes on the same morning Attorney General Sessions testifies at his first oversight hearing before Congress. U.S. Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC), former Attorney General Eric Holder, and former Acting Attorney General Sally Yates are headlining the event.

“We are grateful to the Trump Administration for prioritizing the cause of fighting crime and violence. They have consistently supported our mission, and acknowledged the difficulties and dangers of our profession. We stand ready to work with the White House and Justice Department on constructive policies to advance public safety,” said Ronal Serpas, Founding Chairman of Law Enforcement Leaders and former Superintendent of the New Orleans Police Department. “As members of law enforcement, we do not believe that public safety is served by a return to tactics that punish without strong purpose. From decades of experience on the front lines, we have learned first-hand that these responses are ineffective to reduce crime. There is an alternative to these counterproductive policies. That’s what we are here to discuss today.”

At the Summit, prominent law enforcement officials will discuss their views on why overly punitive policies are counterproductive to public safety, and will profile the work they have done in their localities to advance more modern strategies.

Speakers at the Summit include the following (see the full program here):

- **Eric Holder**, former U.S. Attorney General (D)
- **Sally Yates**, former Acting U.S. Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General (D)
The letter and accompanying report lay out five defining recommendations that participating law enforcement believe are key in the fight to keep our country safe:

- Prioritize federal resources to fight violent crime
- Urge Congress to enact federal sentencing reform
- Increase resources for mental health and drug treatment
- Increase support for local community policing, and
- Expand reentry programs to reduce recidivism.

Watch a livestream of the Summit here, starting at 9:00am.

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Law Enforcement Leaders’ calls for criminal justice reform are being welcomed by reform advocates across the political spectrum.

“Few voices are more vital to the criminal justice debate than those of the men and women we entrust to protect our communities,” said Mark Holden, Senior Vice President and General Counsel of Koch Industries. “Today, the nation’s most respected law enforcement leaders laid out tactics that their decades of experience have shown will best reduce crime and unnecessary incarceration. The Administration and Congress should heed their valuable advice. Koch Industries views bipartisan criminal justice reform as a moral, fiscal, and conservative issue, and remains committed to advocating for comprehensive reform.”
"The most respected names in law enforcement are uniting with leaders on both sides of the aisle to say we cannot repeat the mistakes of the war on drugs when it comes to dealing with today's public safety challenges," said Clark Neily, Vice President for Criminal Justice at the Cato Institute. "Criminal justice reform is necessary to stop the waste of taxpayer dollars and ensure that law enforcement can concentrate on what matters."

"Law enforcement officials who are on the frontlines can offer valuable insight about how to prevent and respond to crime," said Marc Levin, policy director for Right on Crime. "We are pleased that so many law enforcement leaders have come together to support reforms that are working in states from Texas to South Carolina to hold offenders accountable and enhance public safety. We urge lawmakers across the country to listen to the commonsense voices of those who risk their lives to keep this country safe and have identified solutions that reduce both crime and costs to taxpayers."

"Law enforcement, along with leading conservatives and progressives, agree that doubling down on old, ineffective criminal justice policies has not benefited our country," said Holly Harris, executive director of the U.S. Justice Action Network. "Smarter policies are being implemented on the state level. The Administration and Congress need to realize that reform is already happening, and succeeding, in their backyards. We urge the Administration to stop clinging to failed policies and join law enforcement and conservative leaders in building a stronger, more effective system."

"Whether in city halls, state capitals, or Washington, D.C., we hope lawmakers will listen to law enforcement's advice to help reform our criminal justice system," said Doug Deason, President of Deason Capital Services and Deason Foundation President. "We need a system that is based on equal treatment for all, prioritizes redemption and rehabilitation over punishment, and enables law enforcement to best serve their communities."

"The Administration continues to fall back on retrograde policies that prioritize punishment above all else, despite evidence that such strategies are counterproductive to public safety," said Inimai Chettiar, Director of the Justice Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law. "Today's Summit demonstrates that many leaders in the law enforcement community understand that the best way to ensure public safety is to seek innovative solutions that reduce crime and incarceration together. We hope the Administration and Congress will take their voices seriously."

"As someone who served time in prison, I know that a diverse group of stakeholders is necessary to build a safer and more just criminal justice system," said Glenn E. Martin, President and Founder of JustLeadershipUSA. "Having a brother who serves as a US Marshall reminds me that for reform to be effective, law enforcement must play an active and engaged role. Today's summit confirms that many law enforcement leaders understand this responsibility and are ready to act. Moving forward, we must get new policies right and work collaboratively to achieve meaningful reform."
About Law Enforcement Leaders

Law Enforcement Leaders unites more than 200 police chiefs, sheriffs, district and county attorneys, attorneys general, and U.S. attorneys from all 50 states. For a full members list visit our website.

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