



LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS

To Reduce Crime & Incarceration

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Louisiana Criminal Justice Reform Fact Sheet

Louisiana Reforms

- Louisiana continues to have one of the highest incarceration rates in the nation.
- In March 2017, Governor Edwards' Justice Reform Task Force released recommendations on how our state could adopt better crime control policies in ten separate bills.
- The ten bills, known as the Justice Reinvestment legislation, were signed into law in June 2017. The bills aimed to strengthen community supervision practices, clear away barriers to successful reentry, and reinvest portions of the savings into evidence-based programs, alternatives to incarceration, and victim-support services. Louisiana is projected to see a 10 percent decrease in its incarcerated population over ten years.

Preliminary Effects of Louisiana Reforms

- The Justice Reinvestment reforms first annual performance report from June 2018 demonstrated that Louisiana has already seen a 7.6 percent total decrease in its prison population from 2016.
- In 2007, Louisiana had the highest incarceration rate in the country.¹ Although by the end of 2017, its ranking remained unchanged, Louisiana saw a 19 percent reduction in the crime rate from 2007 to 2017, while there was a 17 percent decrease in the incarceration rate.
- Moreover, the FBI's 2018 preliminary crime data (Jan-Jun 2018) shows that the total number of violent offenses declined by 7 percent in four of Louisiana's top cities, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, New Orleans and Shreveport.²
- Though Louisiana's crime rate remains higher than the national average, there is no evidence from which to conclude that a high rate of imprisonment is an effective solution, especially in light of the success of the reform efforts coupled with reduced crime rates in neighboring states.

State Examples

- South Carolina:
 - South Carolina had a higher crime rate than Louisiana in 2007 but was able to reduce crime at a faster rate than Louisiana — a 27 percent reduction by 2017, while simultaneously reducing its incarceration rate by 26 percent over the same period.
 - In 2008, South Carolina adopted several key policy shifts, such as reduced admissions to prisons, reclassification of many property crimes as misdemeanors, and elimination of mandatory sentencing for nonviolent drug possession crimes.
 - Moreover, between 2010 and 2016, six prisons closed, saving taxpayers \$491 million.

¹ In 2018, Oklahoma overtook Louisiana as the state with the highest incarceration rate in the country.
<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2018/07/02/oklahoma-highest-incarceration-rate>.

² FBI Preliminary Semiannual Uniform Crime Report, January–June, 2018, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/preliminary-report>.

State Examples (continued)

- Texas:
 - South Carolina followed the lead of Texas in enacting criminal justice reforms.
 - In 2007, the Texas legislature was faced with a tight budget and a need for 17,000 new prison beds over 5 years at the cost of \$2 billion.
 - Instead, the state legislators passed a “justice reinvestment” package, dedicating \$241 million for treatment and diversion programs designed to reduce incarceration while simultaneously protecting public safety.
 - From 2007 to 2017, the total incarceration rate in Texas decreased by 17 percent, while crime decreased by 36 percent.
 - According to statistics, the recidivism rate quickly fell from 52 percent to 16 percent. The reforms also helped Texas avoid more than \$3 billion in spending.

National Examples

- From 2007 to 2017, there was an 8.3 percent decrease in the number of incarcerated people under federal correctional jurisdiction, while both in federal and state jurisdictions, there was a 13 percent decrease in the imprisonment rate.
- From 2007 to 2017, according to FBI statistics, there was a 22 percent average decrease in the crime rate per state, with crime increasing in only four states.

“Louisiana has joined the nationwide movement to pass sensible criminal justice reforms, along with many states and, recently, the federal government. These deliberate and reasoned reforms deserve credit for the impacts they have already had and will have in the future. Nationally, data have demonstrated that these reforms successfully hold offenders accountable, allow police and prosecutors to focus on violent criminals, and provide effective programs for successful reentry,” said retired Chief Ronal Serpas.

About Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration

Founded in October 2015, Law Enforcement Leaders (LEL) unites nearly 200 current and former police chiefs, sheriffs, federal and state prosecutors, and attorneys general from all 50 states to strategize for a safe reduction in both crime and incarceration. Our national coalition is committed to identifying and implementing solutions to simultaneously reduce crime and incarceration by advocating for four specific changes:

- Increasing alternatives to arrest and prosecution, especially mental health and drug treatment.
- Restoring balance to criminal laws.
- Reforming outdated mandatory minimums.
- Strengthening community-law enforcement ties.

History of LEL Advocacy

- Federal and state advocacy have been a long-standing priority for Law Enforcement Leaders.
- Our work ranges from op-eds, sign-on letters, meetings, Congressional briefings and hearings, and occasional joint press events.
- The first major federal reform LEL pursued was a bipartisan bill, the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015, which through Law Enforcement Leaders and allied groups’ efforts became the predecessor for what we now know as First Step Act.
- Our coalition and our members have worked closely in states to support smart-on-crime policies, such as helping to pass a comprehensive package of reforms in Oklahoma and pushing back on legislation to undo juvenile justice reforms in Kansas, among other measures.