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60+ Top Law Enforcement to Congress: White House Criminal Justice Efforts Not Sufficient to Reduce Crime

Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act (S.1917) Should Be Included in White House-Backed Prison Reentry Efforts

Washington, D.C. – Today, over 60 police chiefs and prosecutors—all members of [Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime and Incarceration](#)—sent a [letter](#) to the Senate and House leadership calling on Congress to pass sentencing reform, as a part of the White House’s commitment to reduce recidivism.

The letter comes in advance of an expected House Judiciary Committee vote this week on a [prison reform bill](#), which is opposed by both [progressive groups](#) and law enforcement alike because it does not address sentencing. Just last week, Law Enforcement Leaders encouraged members of Congress to instead take action on Senate legislation that includes both sentencing and prison reform, in a series of meetings that included Jared Kushner, Law Enforcement Leaders member Timothy Heaphy, and other bi-partisan advocates.

“Improving prison conditions and reentry services, on their own, will not adequately solve our high rates of incarceration and recidivism,” **the letter reads**. “Legislation like the Prison Reform and Redemption Act (H.R.3356) and the CORRECTIONS Act (S. 1994) are useful efforts to improve the lives of those in prison. But such efforts should be coupled with efforts to reduce unnecessary incarceration, as it is in the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act... As law enforcement leaders, we want to make clear where we stand: Not only is passing federal mandatory minimum and reentry reform necessary to reduce incarceration, it is also necessary to help police and prosecutors continue to keep crime at its historic lows across the country. We believe the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act will accomplish this goal and respectfully urge Congress to swiftly pass it.”

“Law enforcement from across the nation want our leaders in Washington to know we want them to address ineffective and outdated federal mandatory sentencing,” said **Ronal Serpas, Chairman of Law Enforcement Leaders and former Superintendent of the New Orleans Police Department**. “Any effort to reduce the cycle of crime and prevent recidivism should include sentencing reform, alongside prison reform measures. The Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act does just that. To help keep our communities safe, we ask the White House and Congress to work together to swiftly pass this bill.”

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-Illinois), the lead co-sponsors of the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, issued the following statements.

“True justice demands that criminals be held accountable and that those consequences fit the crime. The Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act aids law enforcement’s efforts to keep our communities safe while ensuring that punishments fairly reflect the underlying crime. I’m grateful for the support of so many prominent law enforcement leaders as we continue to advance comprehensive criminal justice reform that gives judges more discretion over sentencing for non-violent offenders, targets career and violent criminals and helps to reduce recidivism. The bill also increases penalties

for crimes involving fentanyl, a dangerous drug at the center of the current opioid crisis. I welcome continued input from the law enforcement community, the administration and other stakeholders as we continue to advance these comprehensive reforms,” **Grassley said**.

“The United States incarcerates more of its citizens than any other country on earth. Mandatory minimum sentences were once seen as a strong deterrent—in reality, they have too often been unfair, fiscally irresponsible and a threat to public safety. Any meaningful criminal justice reform legislation must modernize these outdated and ineffective laws that have cost American taxpayers billions of dollars. This compromise represents more than five years of work, and I’m glad to have the support of police chiefs, sheriffs, and federal and state prosecutors who understand that our current sentencing laws make us less safe,” **Durbin said**.

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#). Signatories include:

- **Peter Newsham**, Chief of Police, Washington, D.C.
- **Cyrus Vance**, District Attorney, New York County, New York
- **William Scott**, Chief of Police, San Francisco County, California
- **William Citty**, Chief of Police, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- **Art Acevedo**, Police Chief, Houston, Texas
- **Ronal Serpas**, Chairman, Law Enforcement Leaders; former Superintendent, New Orleans Police Department; Former Police Chief, Nashville, Tennessee
- **Chris Magnus**, Chief of Police, Tucson, Arizona
- **George Kral**, Chief of Police, Toledo, Ohio
- **Timothy Heaphy**, Former U.S. Attorney, Western District of Virginia
- **Brett Tolman**, Former U.S. Attorney, District of Utah
- **John Walsh**, Former U.S. Attorney for the District of Colorado
- **Gil Kerlikowske**, Former U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner; Former Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy
- **Matt Orwig**, Former U.S. Attorney, Eastern District of Texas
- **Richard J. Pocker**, Former U.S. Attorney, District of Nevada
- **Barry Grissom**, Former U.S. Attorney, District of Kansas
- **David LaBahn**, President and CEO of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
- **Richard Doran**, Former State Attorney General, Florida
- **John Chisholm**, District Attorney, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
- **George Gascon**, District Attorney, San Francisco County, California; Former Police Chief, San Francisco, California

Law Enforcement Leaders has previously urged the President and Attorney General to support this sentencing reform legislation in a [policy agenda](#).

To schedule an interview with Chairman Serpas or learn more about Law Enforcement Leaders, please contact Fiona Druge at Fiona.Druge@berlinrosen.com or (646) 755-6126.

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About Law Enforcement Leaders

[Law Enforcement Leaders](#) unites over 200 current and former police chiefs, sheriffs, federal and state prosecutors, and attorneys general from all 50 states to urge for a reduction in both crime and incarceration. We believe that the country can reduce incarceration while keeping down crime, and

we support changes to our criminal justice system to achieve that goal. See a full list of members [here](#).