

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/paid-in-full-a-plan-to-end-money-injustice-in-new-orleans>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

The role that money in the form of bail, fines and fees plays in criminal justice systems has come under increased focus. These practices have long plagued New Orleans, driving jail incarceration and costing struggling families most of them black millions. Two federal courts recently ruled that judges cannot lawfully impose money bail or enforce conviction fees because their own institution stands to benefit financially from these same decisions. To its credit, New Orleans has been taking the initiative to change by, for example, virtually eliminating money bail for municipal offenses and replacing all revenues the Criminal District Court would lose by eliminating money bail and conviction fees. The system is now paid in full. The next step is to align court practices with this new system of funding to end money injustice and replace it with a fairer and safer system. This report sets out a blueprint to achieve that reality.

By taking the actions set out in this report, Criminal District Court judges, the mayor, and city council members will make New Orleans the first city in the country to replace money bail and conviction fees with a fair, safety-promoting, and financially stable system of justice.

Replacing money bail with the practices outlined in this blueprint is projected to reduce the number of New Orleanians in jail on any given day by 304 to 687 people.

New Orleans families will be able to keep the nearly \$9 million they now spend each year to buy their freedom and spend that money on basic necessities instead.

The city will save \$5.5 million in taxpayer money from unnecessarily jailing people and will be able to reinvest it in ways that will help support the community.

PUBLICATION

VIDEO

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