

The Sentencing Project

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/the-state-of-sentencing-2008-developments-in-policy-and-practice/>

Policy Issue Resources

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The politics and the realities of incarcerating 2.3 million people and supervising an additional five million Americans on probation and parole have demanded a shift in thinking regarding the best strategies to maximize public safety while preserving justice and fairness. Since 2000, most states have taken some action to address the expanding prison population. These reforms have commonly included alternative sentencing provisions, establishing and expanding drug courts, amending parole eligibility requirements, and reforming parole and probation revocation procedures.

The legislative and policy reforms in 2008 were no exception, with 17 states enacting changes in the areas of sentencing, drug policy, parole revocation, and racial justice. However, the budget crisis faced by most states, coupled with looming deficits in subsequent fiscal years, have increased the urgency of grappling with these challenges. Nationally, 31 states reported a total budget gap of nearly \$30 billion in December 2008, a figure that is likely to grow as states struggle with their fiscal year 2010 budgets. Since 1990, state corrections expenditures have grown by an average of 7.5% per year. Thus, corrections represent a substantial contributor to the budget problems faced in many states.

This report highlights a number of key state-level criminal justice policy developments that occurred during 2008.

To read the report, download the PDF below.

Increase in U.S. jail & prison population in the last 40 years

Sentencing Policy

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