

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/statehouse-prison-pipeline-2017>**

### Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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Gary Daniels, chief lobbyist for the ACLU of Ohio, is a realistic optimist, a valuable trait for the rare dissenting voice against mass incarceration in the Ohio Statehouse.

Our powerful new report, [Statehouse to Prison Pipeline 2017](#), sprang from Gary's everyday experience listening to legislators, police and prosecutors as they earnestly justify destructive policies: sending more people to prison, for more reasons, for longer periods. New crime bills are so common in the capitol that hearings often overlap, forcing Gary to pick which bill to fight on any given day.

The volume of incarceration bills gave the realistic optimist a powerful idea: count them. Show legislators that their numerous small, politically pleasing bills on drugs, on fantasy football are part of a systemic problem that has created a pipeline to prison, especially for people of color.

In the last session, Ohio legislators introduced over 90 bills to create new crimes, expand definitions of old ones, or increase prison time. One out of every ten bills introduced was a crime bill, an amazing statistic considering how many different subjects legislators are tasked with considering.

#### **Sixteen sentencing enhancement bills became law.**

*Statehouse to Prison Pipeline 2017* shows legislators that mass incarceration is not an accident. It is a pipeline that starts with them when they introduce bills, often neglecting the effect it will have on Ohio's incarceration crisis.

*Statehouse to Prison Pipeline 2017* pushes the focus for mass incarceration where it belongs: on deviant legislative practices. This tidal wave of crime bills, despite years of low crime rates, is not normal.

#### **1 in 9 bills in the House and 1 in 15 bills in the Senate enhanced, created or expanded criminal penalties.**

The report presents a provisional solution that fits the official legislative priorities of both parties: temporarily end the Statehouse's role in the incarceration pipeline. Consider *no new crime bills* until the General Assembly's Ohio Criminal Justice Recodification Committee upcoming report. The Recodification Committee is a [two-year, \\$250,000 legislative effort](#) to streamline, clarify and improve fairness in the bloated Ohio criminal code, a tome longer than *War and Peace*.

Ohio legislators know they have an unhealthy addiction to crime bills. This report shows legislators why it is time to Just Say No.

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