

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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COLUMBUS The ACLU of Ohio and the Ohio Justice and Policy Center released a new report today detailing recommendations for criminal justice reform in Ohio. These recommendations will be delivered to the Ohio General Assembly Criminal Justice Recodification Committee, which is currently tasked with reviewing and revising Ohio's criminal laws.

The time for modest, incremental steps in criminal justice reform is over, said Mike Brickner, senior policy director for the ACLU of Ohio. Ohio is experiencing a mass incarceration crisis. By using criminal-justice tools to address social and public health issues, we are making these problems worse. Punishment and incarceration will not fix poverty, drug addiction, mental illness or an overall lack of opportunities.

The report by the ACLU and OJPC lays out six major policy recommendations that include limiting automatic punishments, prioritizing rehabilitation, releasing innocent people from jail, decriminalizing poverty, limiting collateral consequences and reforming community control.

Our current approach to criminal justice is costing the state in every sense of the word, said Stephen JohnsonGrove, deputy director for the Ohio Justice and Policy Center. The \$1.7 billion spent to operate the state prison system each year is money that should be used to enrich our communities. Every dollar used for funding prisons is a dollar not spent on crime-survivor services, schools, addiction treatment, mental healthcare and other services that keep people out of the criminal justice system in the first place.

Read the full report "[Looking Forward: A Comprehensive Guide to Criminal Justice Reform in Ohio.](#)"

Despite modest attempts at criminal justice reform in the past, Ohio's prison population continues to grow. In 2015, the Ohio General Assembly formed the Criminal Justice Recodification Committee to provide a comprehensive revision of Ohio's criminal code.

The Criminal Justice Recodification Committee has a profound opportunity to change Ohio's criminal code, Brickner said. Now is the chance for the legislature to precisely identify and fundamentally change the policies that drive excessive incarceration. The recommendations we have presented can guide us toward a new justice system, one that lifts up the people of Ohio, rather than keeping them down.

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