Reforming the Nation’s Criminal Justice System: The Impact of 2015 and Prospects for 2016

A Report by the U.S. Justice Action Network
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An Overview of Criminal Justice Reform in 2015

Over the past year, criminal justice reform has been propelled to the forefront of national conversation, and on the minds of millions of Americans. For years, advocates have worked tirelessly to chart a path forward to overhaul a justice system that has become bloated, unsustainable and inefficient. But they knew that, to advance meaningful solutions to reduce the prison population and expand opportunities for formerly incarcerated people, that national momentum and widespread support would be needed to spur action.

Fortunately for advocates of criminal justice reform, 2015 proved to be the year that would ultimately place reform within the nation’s reach. And because of the progress made this year, prospects for achievable, comprehensive reform in 2016 are appearing considerable.

To understand why 2015 was such a landmark year, one need look no further than the headlines of the day.

**Criminal Justice Reform Dominates the 2015 News Cycle**

National news coverage highlighted the cracks in the nation’s justice system and illustrated how an outdated “one-size-fits-all” mentality had swallowed up millions of Americans. Editorial boards and columnists across the country opined on the need for solutions as the nation heard the stories of families coping with the consequences of incarceration, and listened as presidential candidates made criminal justice reform a bedrock issue on the campaign trail for the first time ever.

Reform advocates – from the President to the pope – issued calls to action, urged solutions for reform, and spoke to Americans of every political stripe and in every corner of the country.

And those messages were heard. An American public, saturated with stories of the system’s shortcomings, became informed, engaged, and ultimately invested in reforming the justice system.

**Justice Reform Generates News Coverage in 2015**

2015 was a banner year for advancing reforms to the criminal justice system, as well as for catapulting the issue to the forefront of national discussion. Following are some of the standout headlines and moments that defined 2015.

- **USA Today Editorial on Sentencing:** USA Today, one of the most widely circulated newspapers in the nation, editorializes for the first time ever on federal sentencing reform, following an editorial board meeting with the Coalition for Public Safety. “Harsh sentences for low-level non-violent drug offenders — the mules, couriers, street-level dealers and middlemen — do not fit the crime. These offenders still make up about a quarter of those in federal prisons,” the editorial argued.

- **David Simon of HBO’s “The Wire”:** David Simon, creator of the HBO television series “The Wire”, emerges throughout 2015 as a national advocate for reforming the criminal justice system, first making national headlines in March following a taped, sit-down conversation he has with President Obama on the perils of the system, which goes viral.

- **Congress Moves Forward:** In early October, after years of bipartisan negotiation and compromise, leaders of both the Senate and House Judiciary Committees introduce long-awaited justice reform legislation in their respective chambers. TIME Magazine’s headline refers to the Senate bill as a “game changer.” Both bills are approved by the Committees in the weeks following, advancing toward the floor for further action.
**Public Support for Reform Grows**

National polling showed significant support among Americans for overhauling the system reaching historic highs.

An ACLU poll this summer indicated that more than two-thirds of voters said it is important to reduce the nation’s prison population, and 87 percent believe that drug addicts and those with mental illness should not be in prison, but in treatment facilities. The American view of the criminal justice system had undergone a significant transformation that began demanding smart and commonsense solutions.

**Washington Takes Action: Criminal Justice Reform at the Federal Level**

Much like the rest of the nation, Washington, D.C. was gripped by the ongoing conversation surrounding criminal justice reform. From lawmakers on Capitol Hill, to the White House, to prominent political voices and advocates, Washington saw an opportunity to leverage national conversation into action – and began to make its own headlines.

**Strange Bedfellows and Supporters of Every Ilk**

Conservatives and progressives coalesced around criminal justice reform to make a unified push for action, showing a side of Washington few Americans recognized.

“Criminal justice reform is becoming Washington’s bipartisan cause,” asserted TIME Magazine in February, following the launch of the Coalition for Public Safety. “The group’s formation is just the latest sign of the emerging bipartisan agreement about the flaws riddling the justice system.”

Neera Tanden, of the progressive Center for American Progress, and Matt Kibbe, of the conservative FreedomWorks, sat side-by-side on Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show” in April, explaining that overhauling the justice system is a unique area with bipartisan consensus, and represents an opportunity to seize on bipartisan momentum to enact federal reforms. At the Bipartisan Summit for Fair Justice, co-hosted by the Coalition for Public Safety, Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates made the case for congressional action on sentencing reform: “Congress must restore a proportionality to our sentencing laws ... we need an approach that’s more tailored so we can distinguish between those who are a genuine threat to our society and those who are not.”

Newer voices entered the debate as well.

In October, an unprecedented group of more than 130 senior law enforcement officials (including police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys and other sheriffs) signed a letter supporting a clean bill of rights for incarcerated children. They called for an end to the practice of isolating children from their parents when they are in prison, and to require states to develop evidence-based programs to prevent and address the high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety prevalent among incarcerated children.

**Sobering Statistics: 2015 Further Illustrates a Justice System in Disrepair**

With more than 2.3 million Americans behind bars – and a prison population representing 25 percent of the world’s known prisoners, even though Americans represent only 5 percent of the global population – it’s no secret that the American criminal justice system has become a crowded, unsustainable and expensive problem. Taxpayers shell out $80 billion every year to keep millions of Americans incarcerated, resulting in millions of children with parents behind bars. Widely referenced statistics like these have become part of the national conversation, reminding Americans of the system’s shortcomings. New studies released in 2015 continued illustrating a system spiraling out of control, and delivered a sobering message to Americans everywhere – especially families. Below are some of the key statistics and findings that 2015 yielded.

- **Women Shouldering the Burden:** A study released in September by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights highlighted the financial impact incarceration can have on families. In cases where families incur the costs of incarceration – including court fees, visitation expenses and the cost of basic necessities like food – women largely bear the brunt, making up 83 percent of family members shouldering the financial burden.

- **Impact on Children:** A study released in December by the Center for American Progress found that one in two U.S. children has a parent with a criminal history record (between 33 million and 36.5 million children). The numbers are staggering, especially when considering the barriers a criminal record presents in accessing employment, housing and education – and ultimately, the impact it presents for parents to provide for their children.

- **Incarcerated Parents:** A study published in October by Child Trends found that the number of children with parents behind bars is considerable: some 5 million children, or roughly 7 percent of all children living in the U.S., have a parent who is currently or was previously incarcerated.
sheriffs, prosecutors, and attorneys general) from all 50 states descended upon Washington to push for an overhaul of the justice system. Supreme Court Justices Anthony Kennedy and Stephen Breyer testified before a House panel, arguing that the criminal justice system had become too harsh. “This idea of total incarceration just isn’t working,” Justice Kennedy said. Justice Breyer said mandatory minimum sentences for specific crimes were a “terrible idea.”

Coordinated and organized, Washington began working, and what emerged were bipartisan legislative reform packages in both the House and the Senate. Momentum and support began to translate into action.

Congress Takes Action

Following years of bipartisan compromise and negotiation, pressure was mounting for bipartisan leaders of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees to produce legislative reform packages that would address key issues like easing mandatory minimum restrictions, supporting programs to reduce recidivism, and promoting re-entry initiatives to promote expanded opportunities for formerly incarcerated people.

The Senate Goes First

Throughout most of 2015, key members of the Senate Judiciary Committee negotiated the details of a bipartisan criminal justice reform bill that would represent Congress’s opening salvo in the larger push for reform. Amidst these negotiations, national faith leaders weighed in.

Compromise on the Horizon

By early October, Sen. Grassley announced the Senate had reached a deal, and introduced The Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015. The bill limited mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent offenders, and included other crucial elements to help alleviate a crowded prison system, reduce recidivism rates, and support work and education programs as well as drug rehabilitation programs.

“The tone surrounding the package has changed, and it’s moved from skepticism now to a hopeful tone,” said U.S. Justice Action Network’s Executive Director Holly Harris to Politico. “I think this bill’s going to be more significant than initially thought.”

The Senate bill generated widespread praise, representing a major first step in the effort to advance comprehensive and meaningful reform. Just weeks later, on Oct. 22, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the bipartisan measure, and the bill advanced toward the full Senate for consideration. Focus then quickly shifted toward the House.

Faith leaders weigh in on justice reform

Perhaps some of the most influential and persuasive voices in the 2015 reform debate were faith leaders. While Pope Francis’s visit to the United States made international headlines, and his remarks on the prison system continued drawing attention to the need for prison reform, American faith leaders delivered their own message to federal legislators. In April, a group representing 130 pastors, rabbis, and other religious leaders in Iowa called on Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, to pursue reforms in mandatory federal prison sentencing as he oversaw the drafting of justice reform legislation. “We are greatly concerned that many federal prisoners are serving disproportionately long sentences for drug offenses overall,” the letter asserted. The letter, hand delivered to Grassley’s office, continued mounting pressure for him to ease mandatory minimums.

“I think this bill’s going to be more significant than initially thought.”

–Holly Harris, Executive Director
U.S. Justice Action Network
Overview: Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015
The Senate’s Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015 represented the opening salvo in Congress’s effort to reform the nation’s criminal justice system. The bill:
• Reforms and targets enhanced mandatory minimums for prior drug felons
• Broadens the existing safety valve and creates a second safety valve
• Includes certifiable recidivism reduction programming in prisons
• Applies the Fair Sentencing Act and certain sentencing reforms retroactively
• Limits solitary confinement for juveniles in federal custody and improves the accuracy of federal criminal records
• Provides for a report and inventory of all federal criminal offenses

The House Makes Its Case for Reform
Just a week after the Senate bill was introduced, House Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) joined bipartisan members of the committee to announce the House version: The Sentencing Reform Act of 2015.

Much like in the Senate, House negotiations resulted in many months of compromise and significant bipartisan collaboration, including the launch of a criminal justice reform initiative in June, which oversaw a comprehensive and thorough review of the areas requiring reform. Members of the House were invited to present their proposals for reform, to be considered for inclusion in final legislation.

On Nov. 18, just five weeks after the bill was introduced, the House Judiciary Committee approved the Sentencing Reform Act of 2015 by voice vote, advancing the measure to the full House for consideration.

House Addresses Issues One by One
The House Judiciary Committee ended 2015 on a high note with passage of its sentencing bill, and signaled that a number of other stand-alone bills would be introduced in early 2016, to be joined with the sentencing bill to complete the larger package of House reforms. Some of the issues the committee plans to address in the forthcoming stand-alone bills include re-entry, prison reform, mental health, civil asset forfeiture, policing, and juvenile justice.
Overview: Sentencing Reform Act of 2015

The House's Sentencing Reform Act of 2015 represents the House's version of the Senate's sentencing reform bill, and is one of several bills that make up the House's larger package of justice reform legislation. The bill:

• Reforms mandatory minimums for drug offenses
• Broadens the existing safety valve and creates a second safety valve
• Applies the Fair Sentencing Act retroactively

Leaders Signal Optimism for 2016

With both the House and the Senate advancing what many advocates would argue is the meat of justice reform (an overhaul of sentencing practices), congressional Republican leadership signaled positive momentum for floor action in 2016.

In October, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) committed to floor action this Congress, while Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI) said that he's personally in favor of criminal justice reform and it's an issue the House should be addressing.

The White House Steps Up Efforts for Reform

At the same time that bipartisan leaders on Capitol Hill were negotiating the details of bipartisan compromise legislation, the White House was pursuing its own path toward reform.

President Obama began using the presidential bully pulpit in 2015 to galvanize support across the nation to address the broken system – which he argued had claimed the futures of too many youth, and which disproportionately impacted communities of color.

NAACP Convention: POTUS Turns Up the Heat

“Any system that allows us to turn a blind-eye to hopelessness and despair, that’s not a justice system, that’s an injustice system,” President Obama said at the NAACP convention in Philadelphia in July. “Justice is not only the absence of oppression, it’s the presence of opportunity.”

President Obama's 45-minute speech called for sweeping reforms to the system, and marked a major turning point in the administration's increased focus on criminal justice reform. In his speech, the President called on Congress to pass bipartisan reform legislation, and to have it on his desk before the end of the year. The timeline seemed ambitious, but it dovetailed with the administration's larger, aggressive effort to start ushering in a new era of fair justice.

Wielding the power and influence of the office, President Obama embarked on a year marked by a series of efforts to turn the tide on the nation's criminal justice system.

Key Moments: The President's Year in Criminal Justice Reform

• Call to Action at NAACP Convention: President Obama's landmark speech at the NAACP convention in Philadelphia in July – calling for sweeping reforms – marked a turning point for the administration's increased focus on reforming the criminal justice system.

• Visiting a Federal Prison: On July 16, President Obama becomes the first sitting president to visit a U.S. prison when he tours Oklahoma’s El Reno Federal Correctional Institution. The President uses the opportunity to spur discussion around the need for commonsense sentencing practices.

• “Banning the Box” and Removing Barriers for Re-Entry: President Obama visits Newark, NJ in November to announce new administrative actions to “ban the box” on federal job applications, removing questions of criminal histories to expand opportunities for employment for formerly incarcerated individuals. In December, the administration continues the focus on re-entry by hosting a White House forum on the Cycle of Incarceration, featuring remarks from senior administration officials like Attorney General Loretta Lynch as well as prominent conservative voices such as Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform.

• Engaging Law Enforcement: In October, President Obama hosts a live-streamed White House discussion with law enforcement leaders from across the country, moderated by Bill Keller of The Marshall Project. Several days later, the President continues reaching out to public safety officials by addressing the International Association of Police Chiefs conference in Chicago, calling for increased collaboration between police officers and communities, and the important role law enforcement will play in reforming the nation’s justice system.
2015 represented the most significant year for advancing both the conversation as well as the solutions needed to reform the criminal justice system. Below are some of its key moments.

**February 19:**
Bipartisan Coalition for Public Safety launches.

**April 29:**
HBO's "The Wire" creator David Simon and President Obama discuss the need for justice reform.

**May:**
President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing issues its final report.

**June 22:**
Coalition for Public Safety unveils “Fair Sentencing & Fair Chances” blueprint for bipartisan reforms.

**June 23:**
Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton focuses on justice reform in first policy speech.

**July 14:**
POTUS delivers remarks at NAACP convention in Philadelphia calling for sweeping justice reforms.

**July 15:**
The U.S. Justice Action Network launches, focusing advocacy efforts at federal and state levels.

**July 16:**
Coalition for Public Safety and Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate co-host “Across the Aisle” on Capitol Hill featuring bipartisan calls for reform by Sens. Booker (D-NJ), Cornyn (R-TX), Lee (R-UT), and Whitehouse (D-RI).

Fix Forfeiture launches to reform civil asset forfeiture laws.

Barack Obama becomes first sitting president to visit a U.S. prison.
July 16:
USA Today editorializes for the first time in support of federal sentencing reform.

September 3:
NAACP officially joins the Coalition for Public Safety.

October 1:
The Senate’s bipartisan Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015 is introduced.

October 8:
The House’s Sentencing Reform Act of 2015 is introduced.

October 20:
Pope Francis visits a federal prison facility in Pennsylvania.

October 22:
The Senate Judiciary Committee approves the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015.

November 2:
POTUS calls on all federal agencies to “ban the box” in the early stages of federal hiring process.

November 18:
The House Judiciary Committee approves the Sentencing Reform Act of 2015.

November 19:
U.S. Justice Action Network releases polling data in Louisiana: 83% of voters say the state’s system needs reform; 79% would eliminate mandatory minimums.
States Lead the Charge: Criminal Justice Reform Across the States

While much of the national focus was fixed on Washington, statehouses across the country spearheaded bipartisan efforts to overhaul crowded and costly state prison systems.

Nearly every single statehouse considered some form of criminal justice reform legislation (or administrative action) in 2015, and state-based efforts hit closer to home. State lawmakers made their cases for reform, in the very communities where reforms would take root, and with the very people who would feel its impact the most.

States across the country advanced bipartisan reform measures, pursuing sweeping reforms to address the skyrocketing costs of unsustainable and crowded prison systems.

Support for Reform Starts to Grow in the States

Advocates for reform, lawmakers, and other key influencers in states across the country helped to educate voters and galvanize support to reform state corrections systems plagued with historically high rates of incarceration, and costing taxpayers dearly. And voters responded.

In a poll released by the U.S. Justice Action Network in November, more than 82 percent of Louisiana voters indicated overwhelming support for criminal justice reform, and more than 90 percent of voters favor rehabilitation programs for low-level offenders.

A Michigan poll, also released by the U.S. Justice Action Network in October, showed almost two-thirds of Michigan residents said the state’s criminal justice system needs to be reformed, and a significant majority also indicated support for reforming mandatory minimum prison sentences.

With states across the country leading the charge to reform the nation’s broken justice system, three states saw tremendous progress in 2015, and are poised to continue breaking barriers in 2016: Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

States lead the charge to ‘ban the box’

Nearly one in three American adults has a criminal history record, which often creates hurdles and challenges in securing employment, housing and education. Reducing the lifelong barriers that people face to successfully re-enter society when exiting the prison system is at the heart of reforming the criminal justice system. Banning the box (eliminating or delaying questions of a criminal history in the job application process) generated significant support in 2015. Business leaders in the private sector – like Koch Industries, Wal-Mart and Target – banned the box, and began paving the way for others to follow. By the end of 2015, 19 states and more than 100 cities and counties have taken steps to remove barriers to employment. In 2015 alone, six states adopted “ban the box” and fair-chance hiring policies, including: Georgia, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, and Virginia.
Spotlight: Ohio

Instead of piecemeal approaches to reform, Ohio appointed a Criminal Justice Recodification Committee to completely overhaul the state’s entire criminal code. The Recodification Committee began its work in earnest in the fall, creating subcommittees to review specific sections of the code. The Senate president asked for one omnibus bill from the Committee that would safely reduce the prison population, eliminate duplicative and unfair laws, and address re-entry issues for those leaving prison or jail.

Additionally, in June, Gov. John Kasich took steps to “ban the box” on state government job applications. The legislature swiftly followed suit, taking up a bill that would apply to all public employment opportunities in Ohio. The Ohio House of Representatives passed this legislation in September with nearly unanimous support and the Senate did the same before leaving in December.

In September, lawmakers in the House and Senate also introduced companion bills to reform civil asset forfeiture procedures across the state. Within a week, the House Judiciary Committee held a hearing on the legislation, and two other hearings followed.

On Tap for 2016:

The Recodification Committee will issue its final recommendations in August with the hope of passing an overhaul of the criminal code later that year.

Spotlight: Michigan

This year Michigan was poised to make significant strides to reform its criminal justice system. In May, Gov. Rick Snyder delivered a major speech in Detroit addressing the need for sentencing reform and setting the tone for change. Michigan’s legislature spent the year considering several measures to address the prison population, while the House passed a bill to institute presumptive parole in the state for low-risk offenders. Additionally, companion legislation to strengthen probation passed the same day. Both measures are now under consideration by the Senate.

Michigan lawmakers also passed legislation to provide greater transparency in civil asset forfeiture practices with overwhelming bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate. Gov. Snyder signed the measure it into law on Oct. 20. This represented a step forward and laid the groundwork to seek and obtain further asset forfeiture reforms.

What Ohio State Leaders Are Saying

Senate President Keith Faber (R-12): “About every 20 years, I was told when I first studied criminal law, legislatures should go through and revise the criminal code to make sure it’s updated and that it meets the current standards, that we’re still not penalizing someone for carrying a lantern in front of their horseless carriage. We’re probably beyond that but ... it’s time for us to take a look at it and do this.”

Ohio Supreme Court Justice Judith Lanzinger, Member of Recodification Committee: “Our primary concern is public safety – that is without question. But we also have the obligation to look at the rights of the accused and certainly that is just as important in determining how we come forward with our recommendations.”

What Michigan State Leaders Are Saying

Rep. Peter Lucido (R-36), on civil asset forfeiture reform: “With this package, we’ve brought transparency to the system, creating new reporting requirements for all government agencies involved in seizing property to ensure that innocent Michiganders are not treated like criminals.”

Former Gov. William G. Milliken (R): “It is long past time for political leaders of both parties to reverse the remaining criminal justice policies that led to a huge increase in our prison population with no payoff in public safety — and that have cost taxpayers around $2 billion a year.”
Spotlight: Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania found itself often at the forefront of the national justice reform conversation in 2015, with President Obama’s call for federal reforms at the NAACP convention in Philadelphia, and the Pope’s historic visit to the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility. However, state lawmakers were already leading the charge for reform, pursuing a series of measures primarily focused on breaking down barriers facing those leaving prison and expanding opportunities for employment. The legislature considered policies that offered individuals a “second chance,” and which also would help reduce recidivism rates and save taxpayer dollars.

Specifically, the legislature advanced a bill that would allow for the expungement of criminal records for low-level convictions. The Senate passed this legislation unanimously. It was approved by the House on a strong bipartisan vote, though both chambers will need to concur once more due to a technical amendment – before it heads to the governor’s desk for his signature.

Additionally, the Senate Judiciary Committee heard testimony in October on pending legislation to reform civil asset forfeiture in Pennsylvania.

On Tap for 2016:

Pennsylvania will continue to focus on critical re-entry measures in 2016, and will also focus on efforts providing additional avenues to seal criminal records and expand access to employment and housing.

What Pennsylvania State Leaders Are Saying

Sen. Stewart Greenleaf (R-12), on re-entry reform: “That’s really ridiculous. These things stand in the way of an individual obtaining a job or education. I think this is the year we’re going to get it passed.”

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Editorial Board: “Fortunately, the bill has bipartisan support. Fixing the state’s asset forfeiture law not only would be a triumph for common sense, but the right thing to do. The Legislature should agree.”

Lancaster Online Editorial Board: “There is bipartisan backing, in Pennsylvania and nationwide, to reform civil asset forfeiture. A recent poll shows that the more Pennsylvanians learn about the practice, the more they support changing it. Senate Bill 869 would require that a person be convicted of a crime before law enforcement can keep his or her property.”

2016: States Poised for Progress

Bipartisan reform advocates and experts at the U.S. Justice Action Network are already looking ahead to 2016, examining and analyzing which states are best positioned to lead on criminal justice reforms. Through extensive research, discussion and careful surveillance of the projected legislative and political landscapes in states across the country, the U.S. Justice Action Network has identified the following states as those most poised for progress, and as such, will focus its targeted, state-based advocacy efforts in each: Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky.
Looking Ahead to 2016: Issues, Moments and Prospects for Reform

The collective efforts witnessed throughout 2015, at the state and federal levels, certainly made it the most significant in the fight for reform. For the first time, the nation at large took an active, invested role in the conversation – no longer was justice reform a topic relegated to policy conferences, legislative hearing rooms and opinion pages – it was a debate being waged in living rooms, at dinner tables, in schools and churches, and by people of every political stripe, in every age range, in every community across the country.

Below is a look ahead to some of next year’s key moments, issues and actions that could impact prospects for reform in 2016, and which will ultimately determine whether or not 2016 will be the year that reforms were achieved.

Narrowing window of opportunity means the first few months are key:
With the 2016 election cycle kicking into high gear, it will be crucial for federal lawmakers and national advocates for reform to make progress on reforms as early as possible in the new year. Momentum and support for reform has reached historically high levels, helping to create a political and legislative environment ripe for reform.

Law enforcement:
Prominent law enforcement leaders are standing up and joining the push for action, and this widespread law enforcement advocacy effort will be crucial in the coming year to continue advancing criminal justice reforms that protect public safety and create better outcomes for all.

Congressional leadership:
Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) have both signaled that reforming the justice system is an important priority. In November, both McConnell and Ryan made optimistic statements signaling the bills could be included on a short list of priorities for congressional action, but stopped short of committing to floor time.

2016 election cycle:
The 2016 presidential election cycle has for the first time made criminal justice reform a hot-button issue being discussed on the campaign trail by presidential candidates. Candidates on both sides of the aisle have shared proposed policies to reform the system, and have shared differing perspectives on the state of justice reform. As the campaigns continue marching forward, it is anticipated that criminal justice reform will continue making appearances in stump speeches, rallies, and interviews by those running for the White House.

45th anniversary of War on Drugs:
The War on Drugs is sourced with both increasing attention on the scourge of drugs and substance abuse issues, but also amplifying the use of mandatory minimums and other one-size-fits-all criminal justice policies for lower-level drug issues. In June, the U.S. will mark the 45th anniversary of the War on Drugs, and will surely see calls for federal lawmakers to continue to reconsider current U.S. drug policies and their impact on incarceration rates, and also more effective ways of addressing substance abuse issues that impact communities everywhere.
About

The U.S. Justice Action Network is the first action organization in the country to bring together progressive and conservative partners, collaborate with law enforcement, and employ federal and state-specific lobbying, public advocacy, and public education efforts to pass sweeping criminal justice reforms. U.S. Justice Action Network’s partner organizations include the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans for Tax Reform, the Center for American Progress, Faith & Freedom Coalition, FreedomWorks, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the NAACP, and Right on Crime.

Organizations Affiliated with the U.S. Justice Action Network

The Coalition for Public Safety is the largest national bipartisan effort working to make our criminal justice system smarter, fairer and more cost effective at the federal, state and local levels. The Coalition has brought together the most prominent organizations from across the political spectrum to pursue comprehensive reforms, including: the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Americans for Tax Reform, the Center for American Progress, the Faith & Freedom Coalition, FreedomWorks, the Leadership Conference Education Fund, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Right on Crime. Together, these organizations represent tens of millions of Americans seeking commonsense criminal justice reforms. Our key supporters are Laura and John Arnold, Koch Industries, Inc., the Ford Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Fix Forfeiture is the first action organization in the country to bring together progressive and conservative partners, collaborate with law enforcement, and employ state-specific lobbying, public advocacy, and public education efforts to pass sweeping civil asset forfeiture reforms. Fix Forfeiture’s partner organizations include Americans for Tax Reform, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Center for American Progress, the Faith & Freedom Coalition, FreedomWorks, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, NAACP, and Right on Crime.

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