



LOUISIANANS FOR PRISON ALTERNATIVES

‘Tough on Crime’ Wasted Money and Didn’t Keep Us Safer

It’s Time to End Mass Incarceration in Louisiana

THE PROBLEM

Louisiana imprisons a larger proportion of its people than any other state, and in fact has the highest incarceration rate in the world — nearly five times that of Iran, 13 times that of China and 20 times that of Germany.¹

Yet, the state’s mass incarceration policies have not made our communities any safer. In fact, there is no clear correlation between increased incarceration and reduced crime. The bottom line is that Louisiana’s sentencing laws are outdated, waste taxpayer dollars, and do not improve public safety.

THE FACTS

Louisiana’s incarceration rate is too high

➤ Louisiana’s crime rate is similar to that of neighboring states, yet the state sends nonviolent offenders to prison at a rate 1.5 to 3 times that of its neighbors.

➤ Louisiana’s imprisonment rate has more than quadrupled in the last 40 years: In 1978, 179 of every 100,000 Louisiana residents were imprisoned, a rate which steadily increased to 816 in 2014, despite the crime index falling by more than 40% over the past two decades.

Louisiana’s high incarceration rate wastes taxpayer dollars

➤ Louisiana spends more than \$625 million per year on corrections, the third largest expense behind education and health care.

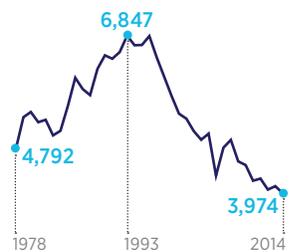
➤ If Louisiana’s incarceration rate were the same as Oklahoma’s (the second highest in the U.S.), Louisiana taxpayers would have saved nearly \$49 million in 2014. If the incarceration rate were the same as that of Arkansas, the fourth highest, Louisiana taxpayers would have saved more than \$90 million in 2014.

Louisiana’s high incarceration rates do not keep our communities safer, do not address issues of public health and do not protect vulnerable populations

➤ The vast majority (86%) of people sent to prison in Louisiana have a nonviolent primary offense, and the top 10 most common crimes for prison admission are all nonviolent.

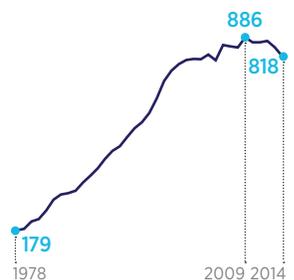
Crime Rate Began Declining in 1990s

*Louisiana Total Index Crime
Rate per 100,000 Residents,
1978-2014*



Dramatic Growth in the Imprisonment Rate in the Last Three and a Half Decades

*Louisiana Imprisonment
Rate per 100,000 Residents,
1978-2014*



➤ Nearly 60% of prison admissions are individuals revoked from community supervision for reasons such as failing a drug test, attempting to commit a misdemeanor, or missing even one court appearance over a lengthy probationary period.

➤ Louisiana is sending — and keeping — too many nonviolent offenders behind bars: 40% of the prison population comprises individuals sentenced for drug or property crimes. These types of low-level crimes are more indicative of a public health concern than a crime epidemic. Prison is not working to eradicate these offenses.

➤ 13% of Louisiana’s prisoners are diagnosed with a serious mental illness and 70% with a substance abuse disorder. Despite a skyrocketing prison population, our mental health and psychiatric facilities have seen a sharp reduction in the number of patients treated.

THE SOLUTION

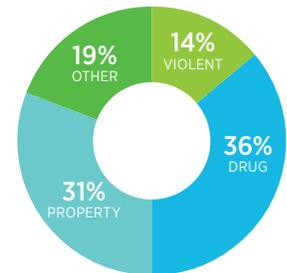
➤ The Louisiana Legislature must address the state’s expensive and unsustainable incarceration rate and create an efficient and humane criminal justice system that truly rehabilitates incarcerated people, reduces recidivism and makes our communities safer while saving millions of taxpayer dollars.

- Implement smart sentencing reforms to make sentences proportional to offenses.
- Improve reentry and supervision programs.
- Promote alternatives to prison.

➤ Louisiana should examine the successes of other states that have reduced both crime and imprisonment in the past five years, including South Carolina, Texas, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee². A 2014 study found that the 10 states that reduced incarceration rates the most saw a 13% reduction in crime rates between 2008 and 2013. Conversely, the 10 states with the largest *increases in incarceration rates* saw just an 8% *reduction in crime*.³

Admissions by Primary Offense Type, 2015

86% of Prison Admissions Have a Nonviolent Primary Offense



Louisianans for Prison Alternatives (LPA) is a diverse statewide coalition of organizations committed to reducing Louisiana’s imprisonment rate. LPA sees an urgent need for the Louisiana State Legislature to pass comprehensive criminal justice reform legislation to make our system more just, accountable and transparent to all Louisianans.

1 Chang, Cindy. “Louisiana is the world’s prison capital.” *New Orleans Time-Picayune*. 13 May 2012.

2 The Pew Charitable Trusts. “National Imprisonment and Crime Rates Continue to Fall.” Fact Sheet. December 2016.

3 The Pew Charitable Trusts, “Most States Cut Imprisonment and Crime,” Nov. 10, 2014, at <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/multimedia/data-visualizations/2014/imprisonment-and-crime>