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Tell Your Senators to Support the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, S. 2123.

As one of our more than 6.9 million FreedomWorks members nationwide, I urge you to contact your senators today, ask them to support Senator Chuck Grassley's Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015 "to reform sentencing laws and correctional institutions, and for other purposes," and to co-sponsor the bill if they have not already done so.

The United States imprisons more of its own people than any other country in the world. We spend enormous amounts of money on prisons, yet with little to show for it. Recidivism rates remain high, and prison overcrowding is causing dangerous criminals to be released to make room for non-violent offenders. The money spent on incarcerating the same people over and over again for non-violent crimes could be put to better use in cost-effective crime prevention programs, following the successful models of states like Texas and Georgia.

The Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act contains a number of elements from other bills that FreedomWorks has supported, including Sen. Mike Lee's Smarter Sentencing Act and Sen. Rand Paul's REDEEM Act. The first section of the bill tackles sentencing reform, refocusing mandatory minimum sentences and limited federal resources on higher-level offenders, and providing new tools to help law enforcement target violent criminals with enhanced penalties. It reduces certain mandatory minimum sentences, and expands the "safety valve" to cover first-time or minor offenders. The expanded safety valve more effectively targets the 10-year mandatory minimum sentence to higher-level drug offenders by allowing judges to take the individual circumstances of a crime—including the actual role of the offender instead of drug quantity alone—into consideration rather than being bound by federal mandates designed to apply to high-level drug kingpins, not first-time users and lower-level offenders. This flexibility greatly reduces prison overcrowding and ensures that the punishment appropriately fits the crime.

This section also clarifies congressional intent for enhanced mandatory minimums related to gun crime by applying them solely to repeat offenders and expands application of enhancements to prior offenses committed under state jurisdiction. These provisions would apply retroactively, though not automatically, to offenders who meet applicable criteria. Those eligible for resentencing are subject to review by federal judges and prosecutors.

The second piece of the bill deals with prison reforms designed to reduce recidivism and enable inmates to emerge as productive members of society rather than as costly, repeat offenders.

These reforms put a new focus on rehabilitation and correction, and establish risk and needs assessment as the cornerstone of more effective recidivism programming and a more efficient federal prison system. Prisoners will be assessed when they enter the prisons and then periodically reassessed over time as they complete the number, type and intensity of programs they need, and work in real jobs instead of sitting idle as they do today. These reforms will incentivize prisoners to not only participate in programs and jobs, but to actually reduce their risk of recidivism. Non-violent, lower-risk prisoners will earn the ability to spend up to 25% of their sentences in home confinement and community supervision. These reforms have not only been shown to work in reducing crime, they have also saved taxpayers costs in the building of more prisons and housing of more prisoners.

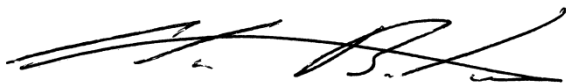
The third piece of the bill addresses juvenile justice reform. Under the current system, young persons convicted of a non-violent offense can have their whole life ruined by a single mistake. The stigma of a felony conviction can severely limit job prospects, and the methods used in incarceration can increase the chances of a one-time mistake transforming into a life of crime.

This bill would allow juvenile, non-violent offenders who do not reoffend after three years to petition to have their records sealed or expunged, offering a second chance at a productive life. The bill also greatly restricts the use of solitary confinement for juveniles, a punishment that has been shown to be both ineffective and psychologically damaging.

Our justice system is failing to keep us safe, reduce recidivism, and make responsible use of our tax dollars. The provisions in this bill would begin to address some of the most serious problems with the status quo, moving towards a more rational approach to sentencing, as well as a more humane treatment of juvenile offenders. However, amendments offered from the Senate floor to include either civil asset forfeiture reform or default *mens rea* can strengthen this bill and would be strongly received by FreedomWorks.

I hope you'll contact your senators and urge them to support and co-sponsor the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, S. 2123.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Brandon', with a stylized, flowing script.

Adam Brandon
CEO, FreedomWorks