



Support Cities: Reform the Criminal Justice System

NLC calls on Congress and the Administration improve the criminal justice system by:

- Passing the “Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015” (S. 2123) to give judges greater discretion in sentencing low-level offenders and to reduce recidivism by matching federal prisoners to programs designed to help them successfully re-enter society.
- Passing the Second Chance Reauthorization Act (S. 1513/H.R. 3406) to provide resources to local governments to improve outcomes for individuals returning to communities and reduce recidivism rates.

The U.S. spends \$29,000 a year to incarcerate one person for one year, including those who are low-risk and non-violent.

Prisons release more than 700,000 individuals back into communities annually.

Without needed support, 2 out of 3 offenders will be rearrested within 3 years.

Federal sentencing policies adopted in response to the crack cocaine epidemic and related violence of the 1980s led to an overreliance on mandatory minimum sentences for federal offenders. Despite increasing evidence that large-scale incarceration is not an effective means of achieving public safety, the trend of incarceration of minor non-violent offenders has resulted in overwhelming federal, state and local governments with the burden of funding a rapidly expanding penal system.

Local officials are working to find innovative ways to reduce the costs of criminal justice and corrections by keeping

low-risk, nonviolent, offenders out of prison or jail, while still holding them accountable and ensuring the safety of our communities. To help local officials, Congress and the Administration should pass legislation that not only reforms criminal sentencing requirements, but also supports local programs aimed at transitioning nonviolent offenders back into the community. Without sufficient resources for local programs aimed at transitioning offenders back into the community, many of them will have difficulty finding a job and a place to live, and more than two-thirds could return to a life of crime because of lack of opportunities.