

Removing Barriers to Opportunity & Expanding Freedom for All

A black and white photograph showing a person's hands gripping vertical metal bars, symbolizing incarceration or restriction. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights the texture of the bars and the person's hands.

Why Comprehensive Criminal Justice Reform is Important for America

“I would unite with anybody to do right and with nobody to do wrong.”
– Frederick Douglass

We’ve partnered with organizations that span the ideological spectrum.

THE LEFT

#cut50	Just Leadership USA
ACLU	NAACP
Alliance for Safety and Justice	NACDL
American Constitution Society	Prison Policy Initiative
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys	Project on Government Oversight
Brennan Center for Justice	REFORM NOW
Dream Corps (#cut50)	The Sentencing Project
Google	Vera Institute of Justice
Families Against Mandatory Minimums	

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THE CENTER

American Bar Association	National Criminal Justice Association
Civil Justice Reform Group	National Foundation for Women Legislators
Council of State Governments	Quattrone Center
Due Process Institute	The Pew Charitable Trusts Public Safety Performance Project
John Jay College of Criminal Justice	Urban Institute
Laura and John Arnold Foundation	U.S. Justice Action Network

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THE RIGHT

ALEC	James Madison Institute
Buckeye Institute	National Black Chamber of Commerce
CATO	Right on Crime (ROC)
CURE (Center for Urban Renewal and Education)	Texas Public Policy Foundation
Edwin Meese III Center for Legal and Judicial Studies	The Federalist Society
Heritage Foundation	The Manhattan Institute
Institute for Justice	Washington Legal Foundation
Institute for Legal Reform	

OUR **GUIDEPOSTS** TO REFORM

- 1 Enhance public safety / keep communities safe.
- 2 Ensure equal rights.
- 3 Provide real second chances for those seeking redemption.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM:

- 1 Is the right thing to do
MORALLY
- 2 It makes sense
CONSTITUTIONALLY
- 3 It makes sense
FISCALLY



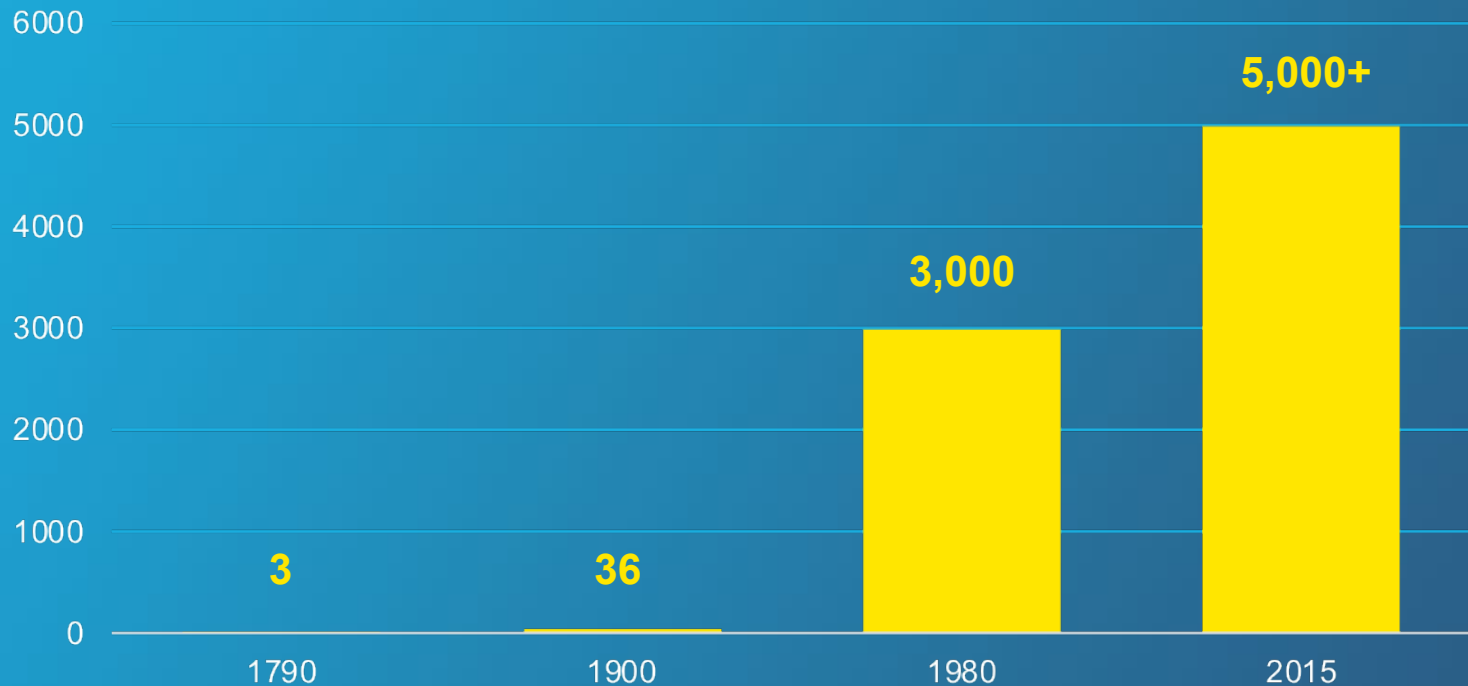
OVER-CRIMINALIZES

OVER-PROSECUTES

OVER-SENTENCES

OVER-INCARCERATES

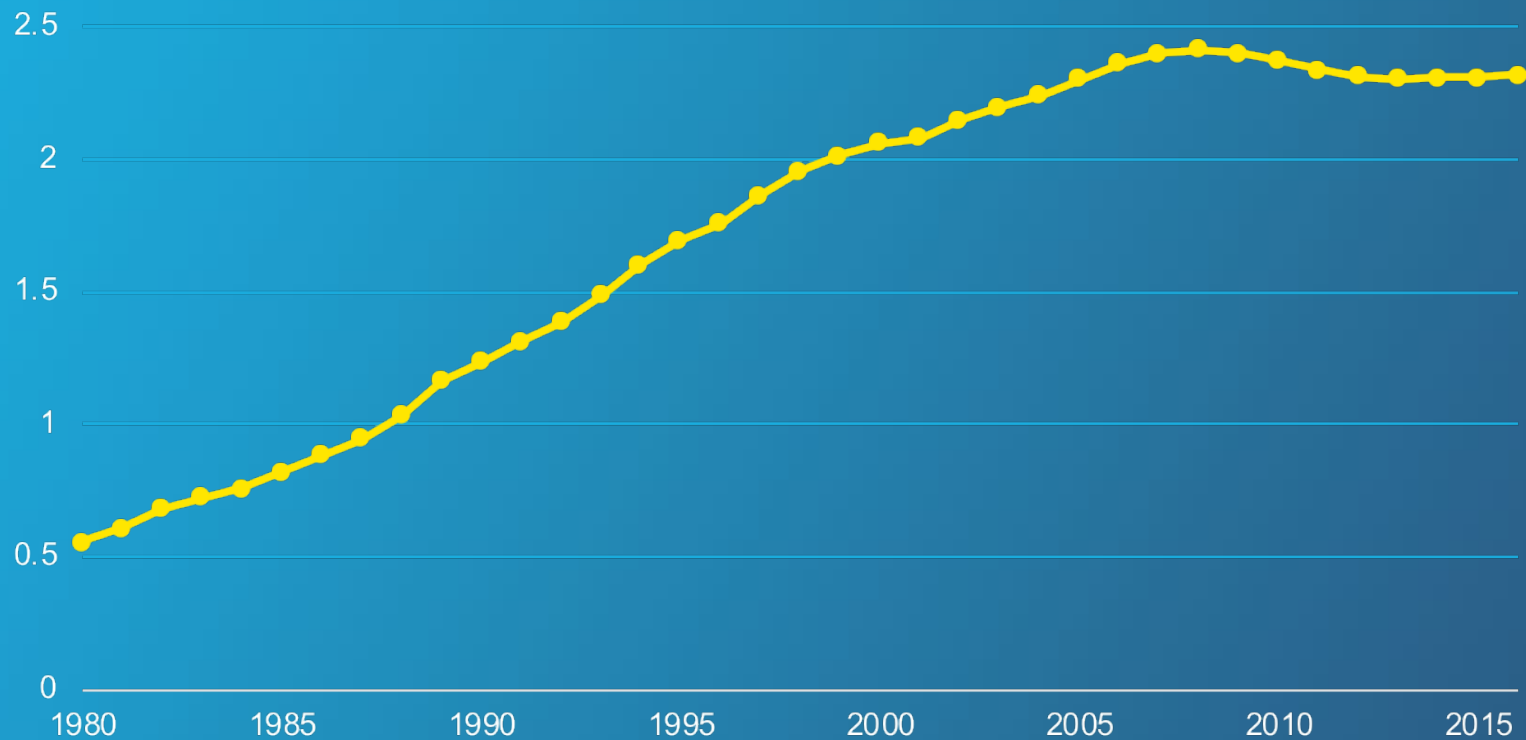
OVER-BURDENS



The U.S. has gone from **3** federal criminal laws to approximately **5,000+** and an estimated **300,000+** federal criminal regulations

1 in **3** U.S. adults have a
criminal record.

The U.S. has **4%** of the world's population
but nearly **25%** of the world's prisoners



The number of incarcerated Americans has increased from **500,000** in 1980 to around **2 MILLION** today.


Nationwide, we spend spends approximately **\$250 BILLION** on the criminal justice system per year and **OVER \$80 BILLION** on incarceration.

This is **3-4 TIMES** more per capita than we spend on K-12 education.



Incarceration and a criminal record create barriers to rising out of poverty for ex-offenders and their families

1 in 28 children (over 5 million) have, or have had, a parent in prison.



Had we not incarcerated so
much, poverty would have
decreased by **MORE THAN 20%**.

2009 VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY STUDY

JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORMS

LEGISLATION	PROSECUTION	COURT SYSTEM	SENTENCING	COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES
Intent & Accountability	Discovery System	Sixth Amendment Reforms	End Sentencing Disparities	Restoration of Rights
Ensure Criminal Intent Standards & End Civil Forfeiture	The Right to Fair Treatment Under the Law	The Right to Competent & Fair Representation	Mandatory Minimum Reforms	Provides Second Chances

The Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution

*"In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a **speedy** and **public** trial, by an **impartial** jury of the **State and district** wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be **confronted** with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the **Assistance of Counsel** for his defence."*

6TH AMENDMENT GUARANTEES RIGHT TO COUNSEL

While this is a given right on paper, it doesn't always play out that way in practice.

- Public Defense offices often lack the resources or staff they need to handle the overwhelming number of cases they face.
- One study showed that Louisiana's public defense system had capacity to handle only 21% of its case load.
- As a result, **97%** of federal cases and **94%** of state cases end in plea bargains, with defendants pleading guilty in exchange for a lesser sentence. (Which may or may not be the result of guilt or innocence.)

Plea Bargains, Probation and Technical Violations

FOR THE 3% THAT DO GO TO TRIAL

Average length of time for a criminal case involving a jury is 17.1 months in the federal system (and most state systems) - far from speedy.

- This is often due to appointed counsel or public defenders being unprepared as a result of overwhelming caseload.
- Which then results in many criminal defendants sitting in pre-trial detention for months before they even speak to their public defender – a violation of our 6th Amendment rights.

A BETTER APPROACH

- Reduce the number of state/federal laws that carry criminal penalties.
- Reclassification.
- Visit alternatives for minor technical violations of parole.
- Seek out community solutions that will train and incentivize more attorneys to practice criminal defense.
- Explore experimental reforms to current prosecution systems.

“While a criminal trial is not a game in which the participants are expected to enter the ring with near match skills, neither is it a sacrifice of unarmed prisoners to gladiators.”

---The Supreme Court



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