



ENCOURAGING ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON AND JAIL

VALUE

We all want a criminal justice system that treats people fairly, takes a pragmatic and responsible approach, and ultimately, keeps us safe. When we've reached the point of deciding to deprive someone of their liberty, we have to be particularly fair and responsible and consider all options. Sentences should consider a range of factors and reflect the severity of the crime. We owe it to ourselves, our justice system, and to those being imprisoned to ensure that our sentencing practices are thoughtful and fair.

PROBLEM

Nonetheless, the explosion of the American prison population is largely due to sentences that are disproportionate to the severity of crimes. Prisons and jails are filled by many people who pose no threat to their communities. Laws that impose mandatory minimums contribute to mass imprisonment. It defies logic to continue to imprison so many people who could experience rehabilitation much more effectively (and through much cheaper means) while still able to contribute to society, support their families, and remain a part of their communities.

SOLUTION

We have to replace our "one size fits all" attitude to sentencing with a responsible approach that recognizes the merit of a range of rehabilitative programs that still ensure justice is served, but more fairly and more sensibly.

ACTION

Tell the United States Sentencing Commission to revise the Sentencing Guidelines to allow for alternative to incarceration, especially for individuals who been convicted of less serious crimes. Urge Legislatures to replace incarceration with community service and/or probation for less serious offenses.