
JUSTICE COALITION FOR SAFETY AND FAIRNESS

One month after taking office, Governor Bruce Rauner set a goal of a 25 percent reduction in Illinois' prison population by 2025. He created the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform and instructed the Commission to recommend an action plan to accomplish that goal.

The Governor's executive order directed the Commission to issue a final report by Dec. 31.

The Commission has held several hearings and committee discussions and has received dozens of recommendations from many different stakeholders. It is not yet clear, however, what recommendations will be supported to achieve the goal of a 25 percent reduction in prison population.

We believe the Commission's recommendations should include the following five actions, and we ask you to join us in endorsing these reforms (see attached document for additional information about each reform):

- ❖ Make every day count: Create accountability for prisoner behavior and rehabilitation by returning IDOC's authority to withhold and award sentence credit for each day served.
- ❖ Establish post-sentencing review by a court or parole board for individuals serving lengthy terms of incarceration.
- ❖ Restore judicial discretion for offenses involving a firearm.
- ❖ Remove counterproductive constraints placed on individuals convicted of sex offenses, including registration and residency restrictions and indefinite detention.
- ❖ Raise the age of criminal responsibility to 21 and create a pathway for young adults under 25 to prevent permanent felony convictions.

Our state can and should safely achieve the 25 percent prison reduction goal. But if the reforms only affect those serving the shortest prison terms for the lowest-level offenses, the state will fall far short of its goal.

We must not lose this opportunity to shore up the very core of our justice system. The mandate in our Illinois Constitution is clear: "All penalties shall be determined both according to the seriousness of the offense and with the objective of restoring the offender to useful citizenship."

We urge you to join us in support of these five reforms. Many voices are needed to urge full and fair consideration of difficult issues, and we want to ensure that the message to the Commission is clear: There is growing public support for meaningful and far-reaching changes in the criminal justice system.

We ask that you please complete the "sign-on support" form attached to this letter and submit it to Jenny Green by Friday, October 30, 2015 – email: jenny@iljp.org. You can co-sign as an organization or as an individual and your name and/or organization will be included on the letterhead accompanying this document as a signatory.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON AND ANALYSIS OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS PLEASE
GO TO www.illinoisjusticeproject.org.