NINE-POINT PLATFORM FOR CHANGE
AT ORLEANS PARISH PRISON

The Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition (the Coalition) is a group of concerned organizations and individuals who believe that the upcoming September 2004 election of the Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff is an opportunity to re-evaluate key policies and practices of the Orleans Parish Prison (OPP). We believe it is our duty to our home city of New Orleans to help our next criminal sheriff establish policies and practices that can reduce the rate of recidivism and contribute to the safety of our community. With the help of organizations and individuals knowledgeable about OPP, the Coalition has published an informative report, Orleans Parish Prison – A Call for Reform. In conjunction with the report, the Coalition endorses the following Nine-Point Platform for Change at Orleans Parish Prison, and urges those candidates seeking the office of the Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff to adopt this platform and commit to effectively implementing it upon election to this important office.

1. Full Compliance with All Consent Decrees

The Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall comply fully with all legally enforceable lawsuit settlements, known as consent decrees, including: (1) Agreed Entry on Medical Care, June 10, 1991 (OPP is required to provide adequate medical and mental health services for all inmates); (2) Environmental Consent Decree, January 14, 1994 (OPP is required to improve conditions of the buildings for inmates and staff; (3) Consent Decree regarding conditions of confinement of juveniles, April 20, 1992; and (4) Settlement Agreement regarding housing, board, and medical services to detainees, March 26, 2003.

2. Establishment of an Independent Monitor

The Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall establish an Independent Monitor Office to review OPP policies, procedures, critical incidents, complaints, and quality of complaint investigations. Based on this review, the Independent Monitor shall make regular reports of its findings and recommendations to the public, elected officials, and OPP staff.

3. End Unlawful Detention

The Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall end any unlawful practice of detaining individuals after a court has issued orders for their release, including the practice of delaying the release of people in its custody until after midnight.

4. Ensure Proper and Confidential Access to Legal Counsel

The Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall provide and maintain the space necessary for inmates to have private and confidential visits with their attorneys and legal representatives.
5. Elimination of Juvenile Detention

Because OPP is not a juvenile detention facility, the Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall end the practice of detaining juveniles and leave the proper care and rehabilitation of juvenile inmates to those agencies with the proper training and resources.

6. Expand Educational Programs Options for All Inmates

The Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall expand existing programs and develop new ones where needed for all able and willing OPP inmates to have access to effective educational programs, i.e. pre-literacy testing/training, General Equivalency Diploma courses, vocational training, certificate and/or degree programs. The Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall expand the prison’s library and computer centers to further ensure the appropriate support for such programs.

7. Provide for Adequate Discharge Planning to Reduce Homelessness and Recidivism

The Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall collaborate with community service providers to establish a discharge planning program for inmates as a means for achieving reductions in homelessness and the high recidivism rate of people with social service needs.

8. Compliance with Federal Standards Regarding Immigrant Detainees

The Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall ensure that OPP is in compliance with all Immigration and Naturalization Service Detention Standards for non-U.S. citizens/immigrants.

9. Employee Training and Management

The Criminal Sheriff’s Office shall institute mandatory continual staff training and skills development programs, regular performance evaluations, and disciplinary programs. This is to make sure that critical policies and procedures, especially those mandated by court orders and consent decrees, are satisfactorily implemented.
Table of Contents

Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition Statement of Purpose 1
Current Membership of the Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition 1
Executive Summary 2
Federal Court Consent Decrees on Conditions of Confinement 4
Literacy and Other Educational Programs 8
The Need for Discharge Planning to Reduce Homelessness 10
Violent Conditions, Delayed Releases, & Inadequate Access to Lawyers and Courts 14
Juvenile Detention 19
The Need to Reform How Immigrants Are Detained 23
The Need for an Independent Monitor 25
Nine-Point Platform for Change at the Orleans Parish Prison 28

Credits

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