



MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: ROBERT BLIZZARD
DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2015
RE: RECENT OHIO STATEWIDE POLLING DATA

As you may know, on behalf of the U.S. Justice Action Network, Public Opinion Strategies conducted a statewide survey of 500 registered voters in Ohio. The survey was conducted September 7-9, 2015, and has a margin of error of \pm 4.4%. The partisan breakdown of the survey is 28% Republican-34% Democrat, and the ethnicity of those interviewed is 81% White-13% African-American. Fully 30% of the interviews were conducted among cell phone only households. The purpose of this memo is to review the key findings from the survey.

KEY FINDINGS

- ***Few Ohioans believe the state's criminal justice system is working well as it is now.***
Just 15% of Ohio voters think the state's criminal justice system is "working pretty well as it is now," with two-thirds of voters (67%) saying it needs either "major" or "minor" reforms. And, fully 15% believe the state's criminal justice system needs a "complete overhaul."
- ***There's strong agreement that treatment is as important as incarceration.***
By a significant 85%-13% margin, Ohioans strongly agree with the statement: "It does not matter whether an offender is in prison for months or years. What really matters is that the criminal justice system does a better job of making sure that when an offender does get out, they are less likely to commit another crime."
- ***By and large, significant majorities of Ohioans believe that state prisons need to be put to the "cost-benefit test" to make sure taxpayers are getting their money's worth.***
By an overwhelming 80%-18% margin, Ohio voters agree that "Prisons are a government spending program, just like any other government spending program, they need to be put to the cost-benefit test to make sure Ohio taxpayers are getting the best bang for their buck."

And, by the same 80%-18% margin, Ohioans strongly agree that "Some of the money Ohio is spending on locking up nonviolent offenders should be shifted to strengthening mandatory community supervision programs like probation and parole."

- **Ohio voters strongly support several different proposals aimed toward reforming the state’s criminal justice system.**

By significant margins, Ohioans strongly support the following reforms:

REFORM PROPOSAL	FAVOR	OPPOSE
<i>Reduce prison time for low-risk, non-violent offenders in Ohio prisons and re-invest some of those savings to create a stronger probation and parole system that holds offenders accountable for their crimes.</i>	89%	8%
<i>Replace mandatory minimum sentences with sentencing ranges so that judges can weigh the individual circumstances of each case, such as seriousness of the offense and the offender’s criminal history, when determining the penalty.</i>	87%	9%
<i>Reform the state’s criminal code to eliminate confusion, inconsistency, and duplication in laws that are on the books here in Ohio.</i>	85%	8%
<i>Send fewer low-risk, non-violent offenders to Ohio prisons so that state funding can be used to keep violent criminals in prison for their full sentence.</i>	83%	10%

Given that each of the proposals above eclipsed 80% total support, it should go without saying that support for these reforms extends across partisanship, ideology, ethnicity, and region of the state.

- **Supporting these criminal justice reform proposals can help State Legislators next November.** Fully 60% of voters indicate they’d be “more likely” to re-elect a State Legislator who favored the above courses of action to reform the state’s criminal justice system, with just 6% saying it’d make them “less likely” and 31% saying it’s make “no difference.”

Republicans say they’d be more likely to re-elect their Legislator by a 59%-7% margin, and Democrats say they’d be more likely to re-elect their Legislator by a similar 59%-6% margin. White Women – a key target audience in the upcoming 2016 elections – would be more likely to re-elect their Legislator 65%-4%.