



2225 Sycamore Street

Harrisburg, PA 17111

Phone: (717) 233-8850

Email: james@susquehannapolling.com

www.susquehannapolling.com

James Lee, President

To: All Interested Parties/Justice Action Network

RE: **Poll Highlights: PA Voters Support Changing Criminal Justice System;  
Strong Support For Adding Non-violent Offenders to Automatic Record Sealing**

Date: April 24, 2023

## POLL METHODOLOGY, CALLING PROCEDURES AND SAMPLE FRAME

Susquehanna Polling and Research, Inc., rated the #1 most accurate firm in the USA by Real Clear Politics<sup>i</sup>, was contracted by Justice Action Network to conduct a Pennsylvania Statewide Voter Attitude Survey testing attitudes and opinions towards viewpoints on the criminal justice system. The poll is a random sample of 500 registered Pennsylvania voters, weighted to state Census data and balanced by geographic region, age, political party affiliation and other factors. Conducted April 19-23 using live telephone agents, the poll has a margin of error of +/-4.7% at the 95% confidence level. The key findings of the poll are summarized below.

## JUSTICE ACTION NETWORK – SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, TOP LINE RESULTS

### **Most Voters Think Criminal Justice System Is In Need of Reform**

A 52% majority of Pennsylvania voters believe the criminal justice system, defined as the system of police, courts, jails and prisons is broken and in need of major overhaul. According to the poll, 52% of voters believe a major overhaul is needed, compared to only 5% who say it works “well as it is”. An additional one in three (or 35%) believe only minor changes are needed. This finding is presumably a reaction to an overcrowded prison system and a belief by many that non-violent offenders are often times incarcerated when other more rehabilitative or restorative efforts are available. Furthermore, when asked about the best way to reduce the crime rate for non-violent offenders, nearly one in three (or 31%) believe the approach should involve treatment and employment options (i.e., addressing mental health issues, reducing poverty and making access to employment easier or improving the economy); only a combined 27% favor harsher penalties or tougher law enforcement measures.

### **Voters Across the Spectrum Favor Expanding Automatic Record Sealing to Include Non-Violent Drug Offenses.**

*Eighty-one (81) percent of voters support* adding offenders with nonviolent drug offenses to automatic record sealing. This includes 81% of Republicans, 82% of Democrats and 80% of Independent or voters unaffiliated with any major political party. This suggests voters do not use a partisan lens on the topic of expanding the automatic record sealing law to include additional offenses, but rather endorse the notion that adding these types of offenders is a common-sense approach to help these individuals have a better chance of finding employment. Support was also found in 80% of households that have been a victim of a crime.

Respondents then heard arguments for and against this measure, that “this is necessary to help these individuals reintegrate back into society, find jobs and stay off welfare, or...automatic record sealing for additional types of non-violent drug convictions isn’t fair to some employers who have a right to know about the background of potential employees.” Even after hearing the arguments against it, 78% of voters still support this expansion to automatic record sealing.

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.realclearpolitics.com/rcp-pollster-rankings/2020/>