

FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR A JUST NATION

Investing in the Restoration of People and Communities:

Furthermore, the United States devotes extensive resources to imprisoning far more people than any other nation in the world. The millions of people who are directly impacted by this explosive rate of incarceration include families and communities of the incarcerated. Communities of color suffer an extensively under this system of mass incarceration. Today one in three black men can find themselves incarcerated.¹ In-prison educational and skills programs and post-incarceration re-entry programs are haphazard and often nonexistent, undermining public safety and making it extremely difficult for ex-offenders to become full, contributing members of society. Mass incarceration strains budgets and forces the Bureau of Prisons, in particular to rely on solitary confinement; often euphemistically called segregation or segregated housing. This is due to the lack of services or real rehabilitation programming for incarcerated peoples. Recently, the Attorney General fired the staff member hired to implement educational programs in federal prisons and has been ramping up enforcement strategies that will likely result in an even more strained system of prisons at the federal level with even less opportunity.

The Second Chance Reauthorization programs created in 2008 is authorized for up to \$165 million. These are vital programs that create an enormous return through expanded opportunity and reduced incarceration by providing community based nonprofits with resources to help returning citizens get back on their feet. The Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) has requested \$52 million for FY18. In 2016 the Bureau of Justice Assistance spent \$68 million. We should robustly fund these vital grant programs to help returning citizens regain their dignity and attain opportunity. Mass incarceration wastes \$80 billion a year nationally.

Preventing individuals from committing crimes and entering the criminal justice system at all is an obvious way to cut criminal justice costs. Accordingly, keeping individuals out of our criminal justice system is inevitably linked to wise investments in other “diversion” programs covered in this budget, including housing, health care, and education.

Juvenile justice programs to states help to fund diversionary programs that keep kids out of prison by providing holistic team-based approaches to developing minds. Keeping kids out of jail is the first step to reducing incarceration and stopping the recidivism before it starts. We should continue to fund and adequately resource the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs.

The President proposed to cut the Legal Services Corporation’s entire budget of \$385 million. This vital program helps to fund legal representation for civil litigants to mount a credible defense curing disputes such as eviction, veterans’ cases, or child custody cases among others. Indigent defense is important in the civil context as well as the criminal context. Poverty is at the root of crime and cutting programs that give needy Americans support will make our society even more unequal and crime-prone.

¹ Shadow Report to the United Nations on Racial Disparities in the United States Criminal Justice System: The Sentencing Project, August 31, 2-13,
<http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/shadow-report-to-the-united-nations-human-rights-committee-regarding-racial-disparities-in-the- united-states-criminal-justice-system/>

A Faithful Budget will:

- Invest our tax dollars in evidence-based programs like education and skills development programs during and after prison that promote hope and change. Fund the Second Chance Reauthorization programs at the maximum levels up to the authorized \$120 million.
- Invest in juvenile justice grants. This will provide guidance to states to incentivize holistic, alternatives to incarceration. Kids deserve love and assistance to develop into productive members of society not pushed into criminality.
- Invest in indigent and civil defense to help needy Americans mount a real defense not merely be relegated to losing on technicalities. Failing to do so or cutting these services will result in higher costs through collateral problems and increased incarceration.

Ceasing Funding for Programs Focused on Punishment:

The United States imprisons far more people than any other nation in the world. So many federal rules carry criminal penalties that experts struggle to count them. The federal prison population has grown from approximately 25,000 in FY1980 to over 205,000 in FY2015. The enormous increase in incarceration over the past forty years has stretched the system beyond its limits and placed an unmanageable cost burden on taxpayers. From 1986 to 2006, the total justice expenditures -- federal, state, and local governments -- increased 301%, from \$54 billion to \$214 billion. High costs of incarceration are unsustainable in the long-term, let alone during times of economic downturn and tight budgets.

The privatization of prison construction incentivizes mass incarceration and consequently increases our already-skyrocketing criminal justice costs. In a March 1997 Securities and Exchange Commission filing, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) acknowledged that “the rate of construction of new facilities and the Company’s potential for growth will depend on several factors, including crime rates and sentencing patterns in the United States.” Thus, higher profits require more inmates. Since most private prisons operate on a per diem rate for each bed filled, there is a financial incentive to detain more inmates for longer periods of time. This incentive creates a dangerous entanglement between interest in profit and sound public policy.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons holds more than 11,000 prisoners in some form of segregation, including 400 in the federal super-max facility, the U.S. Penitentiary Administrative Maximum. Due to the high cost of constructing high security solitary confinement units and the increased number of staff required to run such units, holding prisoners in solitary confinement is significantly more expensive than keeping them in the general prison population. One study estimated that the average cost per cell of housing an inmate in a super-max prison is \$75,000, as opposed to \$25,000 for housing an inmate in the general prison population.

A Faithful Budget will:

- Cease investment in privatization of prison construction and management.

- Limit the expensive and destructive practice of solitary confinement (or “segregation”), in which prisoners are held alone in small cells for 23 hours per day and are permitted little or no social interaction for months or even years.
- Invest in humane alternatives that address the mental health needs of prisoners in a way that effectively contributes both to their rehabilitation and to their successful transition back into society