

The Economist | May 2017

## **“America’s prisons are failing. Here’s how to make them work”**

*A lot is known about how to reform prisoners. Far too little is done*

*“At some point, the costs of incarceration start to outweigh the benefits. Prisons are expensive—cells must be built, guards hired, prisoners fed. The inmate, while confined, is unlikely to work, support his family or pay tax. Money spent on prisons cannot be spent on other things that might reduce crime more, such as hiring extra police or improving pre-school in rough neighbourhoods.”*

*“A ten-year sentence costs ten times as much as a one-year sentence, but is nowhere near ten times as effective a deterrent.”*

*“One study found that each extra year in prison raises the risk of reoffending by six percentage points. Also, because mass incarceration breaks up families and renders many ex-convicts unemployable, it has raised the American poverty rate by an estimated 20%.”*

*“There is ample evidence of what works. Reserve prison for the worst offenders. Divert the less scary ones to drug treatment, community service and other penalties that do not mean severing ties with work, family and normality.”*

Full article [here](#).

The American Conservative | November 2015

## **“Finding Justice for Veterans”**

*When even highly decorated soldiers fail to re-enter civilian life, a prison alternative helps them straighten out.*

*“It is estimated that somewhere between 20 and 40 percent or more of recent combat veterans suffer from PTSD symptoms...In the most recent survey of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America members, 44 percent said they had been diagnosed with PTSD. In that same survey, 18 percent said they have a mild to severe TBI from the war....Left on their own, many veterans suffering from these mentally debilitating symptoms self-medicate, or depend solely on psychotropic drugs doled out by the VA.”*

*“All those transitions and all those traumatic experiences and we expect (soldiers) to come home and police themselves—I don’t think so,” said Rieman, who was recognized for using himself as a human shield after an attack on his convoy in Iraq in 2003.”*

*“Putting them in jail won’t help their situation, it just exacerbates it,” said Gary Augustine, executive director of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) whose members across the country serve as mentors for veterans in the courts. “We do this for other segments of society—juveniles and drug offenders—why not veterans? They are going in the right direction.”*

*“It is also much cheaper to treat veterans than to incarcerate them and throw them into the cycle of suffering and recidivism our justice and prison system is world renowned for.”*

Full article [here](#).

National Review | May 2017

## **“The Conservative Base Wants Criminal-Justice Reform”**

*President Trump’s supporters demand fresh thinking on crime and punishment*

*“When asked if judges should have more freedom to assign punishments other than prison (such as civil or community service), 63 percent of Trump voters “strongly agreed” or “agreed.”*

*“Fifty-four percent of Trump voters said they knew someone who is or has been incarcerated. ... [B]etween 70 million and 100 million people — or one in three Americans — may now have a criminal record. The criminal justice system has become so vast and far reaching, that virtually every American has been personally involved with it, or has a loved one, friend, or neighbor involved with it.”*

*“Consider the example of Oklahoma. On the night that Trump won the presidency, voters also approved changes to the state criminal code that reclassified certain drug felonies as misdemeanors, effectively expressing the view that too many drug offenses in Oklahoma were being treated with needlessly long bouts of incarceration.*

*“Leadership matters in public policy, and for that reason, it would be good to see clear support for criminal justice reform from the White House. Conservative legislators and governors, however, do not need to wait for cues from the administration. The conservative base is already providing them. They have wanted criminal justice reform for a decade, and their minds did not change because of one election.”*

Full article [here](#).

American Legislative Exchange Council  
March 2016

## **“Mandatory Minimum Sentencing Reform Saves States Money and Reduces Crime Rates”**

*“[T]he number of people incarcerated in state prisons has increased considerably over the last three decades. By the end of 2014, the state prison population totaled 1,350,958 inmates.”*

*“Maintenance costs for these overcrowded prisons coupled with growing inmate populations led to skyrocketing state corrections budgets. According to the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO), state spending for corrections totaled \$53.3 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2013, which represented 6.9 percent of state general revenue spending.”*

*“If mandatory sentences for nonviolent and drug offenders were necessary for public safety, their cost would be justified. However, as corrections spending has climbed, most experts have come to believe incarcerating huge numbers of low-level, nonviolent and drug offenders post-conviction is an inefficient and ineffective method of controlling crime.”*

*“In recognition of the rising costs and shrinking benefits of harsh sentencing laws, many states have begun to reconsider their reliance on mandatory minimums for nonviolent and drug offenders... A legislative analysis in Washington state found that ... imprisonment of property and drug offenders leads to negative returns”*

Full article [here](#).