

Criminal Justice Reform



Photo: Reform often looks like a major traffic-jam

The Rope-A-Dope

Commentary

A rope-a-dope is a strategy or course of action. It typically relates to boxing whereby one fighter covers up, often leans back against the ropes, allows the opponent to become exhausted by throwing punches so that the opponent cannot defend effectively late in the fight and is defeated.

There are times when it seems as though Criminal Justice Reform in Arkansas is 'leaning back' waiting for those of us who have been struggling for positive change in the justice system to become 'exhausted' and throw in the towel.

However, as any athlete knows in a competition, in this case, the competition is one of ideas. There are many 'second winds' along the way which will lead to success through hard work, perseverance and fortitude.

A 'second wind' came in 2011 when the Public Safety Performance Project led by the PEW Center evaluated Arkansas; made recommendations on how to reduce recidivism and curtail prison growth. This analysis led to

Act 570 (2011), Arkansas saw reductions in both crime and incarceration.

The 'wind was knocked out' of the progress that was beginning to take shape when the Arkansas General Assembly and Board of Corrections implemented policies that have made Arkansas one of the fastest growing prison populations in the country.

The prison population is closing in on 19,000 compared to 14,805 in 2012.

Another 'second wind' may come through the findings of the Justice Reinvestment in Arkansas, a project of the nonprofit Council of State Governments which made its sixth presentation to the state Legislative Criminal Justice Oversight in July.

However, without a 'third wind' (*from you*) that pushes our State to end its fixation on the mass incarceration of our fellow citizens, we will just be 'blowing in the wind'.

It is up to you to decide which way the wind will blow *or* let the 'rope-a-dope' continue, *your* choice?

(Oh! BTW I will not throw in the towel).

Arkansas CURE



Arkansas Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT

Legislative Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force

Members of the panel include Judges Gary Arnold and Cristi Beaumont, specialty court judges; Washington County Sheriff Tim Helder; Saline County Prosecuting Attorney Ken Casady; Little Rock Police Chief Kent Buckner; President and Chief Executive Officer of Counseling Associates Inc. and Medicaid provider Steve Newsome; Medicaid provider Robin Raveendran; Sen. Jeremy Hutchinson, state Senate Judiciary chairman; Rep. Matthew Shepherd, state House of Representatives Judiciary chairman; Arkansas Board of Corrections Chairman Benny Magness; Arkansas Parole Board Chairman John Felts; Department of Corrections Director Wendy Kelley; Arkansas Community Corrections Director Sheila Sharp; and at-large members Attorney John Wesley Hall, Attorney Tjuana Byrd and business proprietor Drew Baker.

Comments, Concerns, Ideas need to be done NOW!

<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/2015R/Pages/CommitteeDetail.aspx?committeecode=423>

Mail: Attention Criminal Justice Task Force State Capitol Room 250
500 Woodlane Ave.
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: (501) 682-2345

Facts: Arkansas has the fastest growing prison population in the country. (Arkansas had a 22% increase in the prison population between 2012 – 2014).

Arkansas's violent crime rate has decreased by 4% while property crime decreased by 17% between 2012 – 2014.

Our incarceration rate is increasing disproportionately to a declining crime rate. In surrounding states, crime rates and incarceration rates are decreasing at a faster rate than in Arkansas.

By 2014 Prison and Parole revocations skyrocketed 300%, although the number of arrests had not increased. (this means that 1 in every 105 adults in Arkansas was on parole supervision that year).

Between 2004 and 2015, state spending on corrections increased 68 percent, from \$305.4 million to \$512.2 million.

Corrections currently costs more than \$.5 Billion annually (that's our tax money).

Projected growth of corrections will require an additional \$1.3 billion over the next 10 years (that's a conservative \$6.3 BILLION in 10 years)

Arkansas has a population of 2.9 million people. Our prison population is 18,877 men and women (size of Maumelle, AR).

Arkansas Parole Board population numbers 2016
<http://paroleboard.arkansas.gov/MeetingInfo/Pages/BoardMinutes.aspx>

*data from Justice Center: Justice Reinvestment in Arkansas, available at
http://www.arktimes.com/media/pdf/ar_jr_presentation_-_feb_17_2016_final.pdf

"If someone is harmed by a violent offense, we should hold them accountable. But we should also hold the criminal justice system accountable."

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Often we hear... Tell me what I can do and I will do it. This newsletter is devoted to just that. What you need to know and what you can do. But it is up to YOU to act.

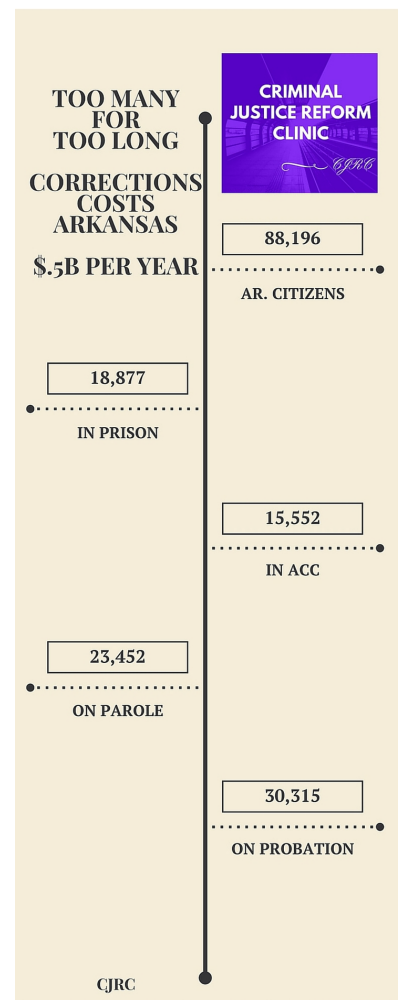


What You Need To Know: In the next few months the Legislative Criminal Justice Task Force will make its recommendation to Governor Hutchinson relating to what (if any) changes need to be made in the Arkansas Criminal Justice System.

Arkansas as of May 2016

Recidivism is virtually the same for probation / parole and incarceration.

The big question is, if we are getting the same results, why are we imprisoning so many Arkansans?



There are 88,196 Arkansas citizens under Criminal Justice Control, 18,877 In Prison, 15,552 In ACC, 23,452 On Parole, 30,315 On Probation.ⁱ (the 2nd largest city in AR., after Little Rock and before Fort Smith 86,209)

Criminal Justice Reform Clinic Non Profit 501(c)(3)
Charity P.O. Box 1054 Mayflower Arkansas 72106
<http://www.criminaljusticereformclinic.com>

Arkansas CURE

"An effort to provide information on criminal justice reform through education and advocacy"

Arkansas CURE has been around for quite some time...since 1996 to be exact. Since that time, the chapter has been a viable advocate for positive change in prison and criminal justice reform here in Arkansas.

DO THE MATH

Prison \$24,000 A Year
U of A \$23,508 A Year



What You Can Do

Arkansas is a small State. A

State where most people know the majority of their community, church, civic leaders and neighbors by their first name.

Speak Out!

Host A 'Lets Talk Incarceration' forum at your church, community center or library.

Talk to others, educate them and educate yourself. Share far and wide the numbers and facts provided in this newsletter.

Invite AR-CURE to speak at your next organized event.

We should not assume that incarceration is the only answer, nor should we assume that incarceration is the most effective way to improve public safety.

Let others know that we can do better *without* sacrificing Public Safety.

We can schedule the Art Collection of issues through our partnering organization the Criminal Justice Reform Clinic for you.

We have thrown the book at criminals. Unfortunately, it's been the state's checkbook.

It is not a matter of being tough on crime / soft on crime but let us be Smart on crime.

Will Arkansas Step Up?

It is not that Arkansas does not know what needs to be done to reduce our over-use of incarceration. The JFA report commissioned by the Arkansas Department of Corrections, Arkansas Community Corrections and the Sentencing Commission explained: "*With a **declining crime rate** and only moderate growth in the resident population, the recent large increase in Arkansas' incarcerated population is likely **driven by policy choices within the state's criminal justice system.***"

With this in mind... Here are some practical ideas that can be enacted with the same 'stroke of the pen' that created the policy choices that made this 'mess'.



Board of Correction: Require that this Board include a member from the criminal justice advocacy community-organization or a successful formerly incarcerated individual or a family member who has been or is currently affected by the decisions of this Board.

Sentencing: Use the sentencing grid in all jurisdictions and hold courts accountable for not using lesser interventions. Remove the mandatory % of time served rules, eliminate the 3-strikes rule and remove the waiting period for clemency denials.

Good Time & Transfer Eligibility Date: Good time should be allowed to be earned by ALL prisoners (it once was). Immediate transfer to a less restrictive environment should be followed with strict accountable reasons monitored, if it does not occur.

Issue a Certificate of Labor/ Rehabilitation: A prisoner working as a plumber, cook, library clerk, landscaping etc. may work these jobs for years, yet on release have no recorded work history that they can take with them to show for these years.

Long Term Prisoners: People who have demonstrated their capacity for change and who no longer threaten public safety deserve a chance at earning back freedom. Implement "Saving Lives Concept" Life with opportunity, an extensive and intensive twenty-year program to address the total person, mentally, physically and spiritually. Use the programs available in the ADC today. Wrapped up into one 20-year package" for long termers.



Capital Case Commission: Create a Capital Case Commission to study the imposition and administration of capital punishment in Arkansas and to make recommendations for improving Arkansas' procedures in capital cases and its capital sentencing procedures and to make corrective recommendations for all recognized cases of injustice and for capital cases that procedures demonstrate a clear lack of fundamental fairness to the defendant and/or the victims.

Continued:

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Find us on the Web:
www.arkansascure.org
Join Arkansas CURE on Facebook

CURE...
is an all-volunteer
membership organization.

No salary, No big office...
Just commitment & passion.

Consider Alternative Legislation: An Act to Authorize Alternative Sentencing of Certain Prisoners Who Have Served Consecutive Sentences of 20 or More Years. Authorizing a Sentencing Court to grant a petition for an alternative sentence by a person who has served a term of imprisonment of 20 consecutive years or more. **In Banc Review of Sentences – Parole Eligibility,** Authorizing the parole of a certain person with the approval of a certain three-judge panel sitting in banc; allowing certain individuals under certain circumstances to seek in banc review of a judgment or determination on any point or question relating to a conviction or sentence or registry by filing a notice for in banc review after a certain time; and generally relating to review of convictions and sentences and parole eligibility.



Check this out!

For a more detailed look at any and all of these ideas simply email: rehab4justice@yahoo.com for an electronic copy of **AR-CURE "How Efficacy Lowers Prison Spending... HELPS"**

(Due to limited funds and volunteers we are not able to mail this out without a self addressed envelope with postage for the 12-page document))

JOIN ARKANSAS CURE!

Want to stay informed about what's going on in Arkansas? Join today!

Please provide the following information:
Name/#, Address, City, State, Zip

Annual Dues

Indigent Incarcerated Citizens: Fee waived.

Incarcerated Citizens: \$3.00 (stamps/stamped envelopes accepted)

Individual/Family: \$12.00

Individual Benefactor: No limit or set fee on donation amount.

Supporting Organization: No limit or set fee on donation amount.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!