



Increase Public Safety



Crime is a serious issue that affects all Louisianans, from an increased burden on taxpayer funds to increased retail costs and the psychological and physical toll it takes on citizens. What works to reduce crime? What actions and policies yield good outcomes? The issue demands thoughtful solutions by state and local governments as they work with communities to deter criminal behavior and promote public safety. The state's criminal justice system must also improve its use of data, resources, and evidence-based programming to achieve better outcomes for those involved in the system so they don't commit crime again.

PROBLEMS

Crime has risen across the United States and Louisiana. Violent crime remains high in many urban centers, with small territorial gangs or small groups of individuals often responsible.

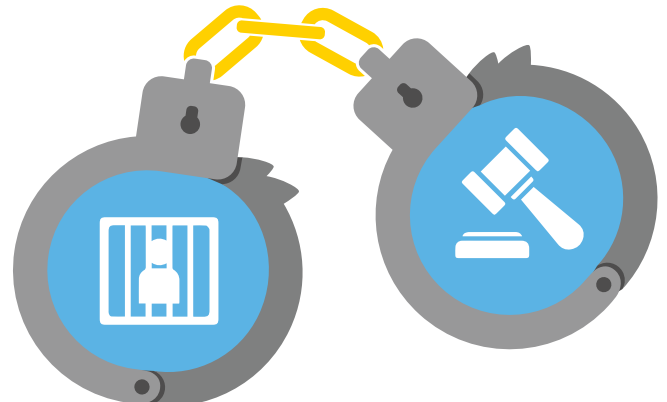
In the midst of all this, there have been two dramatically different schools of thought when it comes to addressing crime. Some have pushed to eliminate cash bail, failed to prosecute violent crime, used lenient sentencing, and called for defunding the police. Others have called for simply locking up those accused of all types of crime, even non-violent crime, with harsher sentences. However, neither of these strategies work. With political rhetoric at an all-time high, few are asking the most important question: What really works to reduce crime and increase public safety?

Law enforcement agencies and officers in Louisiana are often inadequately funded, supported, and empowered to do their jobs well and focus on the most serious threats to public safety.

The state's judicial system has a labyrinth of offenses and sentences that make it difficult for judges to administer and the public to understand, as well as a host of fines, fees, and court costs that must be paid by offenders.

The reforms previously enacted provide alternatives to prison for non-violent offenders and included programs to make the transition back to society (known as reentry) more successful. However, some of the necessary data to measure the success of these programs is not being collected, analyzed, reported, or used to inform decision making. And despite changes, individuals are still having difficulty obtaining the necessary identification documents to live, work, and obtain the benefits they need to remain out of the system.

Some of the recent rising crime has been committed by juveniles. The state's Office of Juvenile Justice has been plagued with issues for years, including safety in secure care facilities and a lack of educational outcomes.



SOLUTIONS

The following are proven strategies for reducing crime and operating a more effective justice system. Solutions should be guided by data and evidence, not anecdotes. Louisiana can reduce violent crime and recidivism and achieve better outcomes for individuals trapped in the criminal justice system revolving door.

1. Adequately fund and support law enforcement.

Louisiana must return to proactive policing efforts by appropriately funding law enforcement, fully staffing each force, and properly educating and training future officers.

2. Transition justice-involved individuals to employment.

The justice system, at both the state and local level, must include effective, evidence-based reentry programs aimed at rehabilitating individuals.

3. Strengthen the implementation of justice system laws.

Louisiana must actively work to improve data in the state and local prison system to show the effectiveness of the various programs recently implemented.

4. Standardize sentencing guidelines throughout the state and provide greater clarity for offenders, victims, and the public.

5. Ease the financial burden of the judicial system.

The work of the Justice System Funding Commission, established in 2019, must continue with strong legislative leadership and oversight. Louisiana must fund the court system using sound practices and stop placing additional burdens on individuals as they reenter society.

6. Improve Louisiana's juvenile justice system.

OJJ should separate violent and non-violent juveniles, based on age and type of crime to the greatest extent possible to reduce the safety issues that have been prevalent in the past. OJJ should expand alternatives to incarceration using proven strategies that allow youth to remain with their family (where advisable), and provide services such as family counseling, anger management, and education. OJJ should work with partners to provide proper educational services to incarcerated youth and improve educational outcomes Louisiana must also address the growing problem of adults recruiting juveniles into criminal activity, particularly through gangs and other small, organized groups.





7. Protect individual liberties from property seizures and forfeitures.

Louisiana must adjust civil asset forfeiture laws – that is, the government taking and keeping individuals' personal property – to allow it only upon conviction of a crime and require greater transparency. Louisiana must join the 35 other states who have modernized their laws to protect the due process and property rights of its citizens.



504-500-0506
info@pelicaninstitute.org
pelicaninstitute.org

 /PelicanInstitute
 @PelicanInst

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