

JFA Institute

Media Coverage for November 19, 2007 Release of
Unlocking America: Why and How to Reduce
America's Prison Population

JFA Institute
*Unlocking America: Why and How to Reduce
America's Prison Population*

**MEDIA COVERAGE
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

NEWSPAPERS

- **Reuters**
U.S. Prison System a Costly, Harmful Failure
November 19, 2007
Article ran in:
 - New York Times
 - Boston Globe
 - Macon Area Online, GA
 - BBC News
 - Tarankai Daily News, New Zealand
 - Turkish Daily News, Turkey
 - Gulf Times, Qatar
 - Daily Times, Pakistan
 - The Nelson Mail, New Zealand
 - Short News, Germany
 - China Post, Taiwan
 - The Star, Malaysia

- **Wall Street Journal Interview**
November 20, 2007

- **U.S. News and World Report**
The report will be included in a December article

- **Investor's Business Daily**
Criminal Justice Overhaul Urged
November 19, 2007

- **Washington Times**
Event Announcement - Today's headliners
November 19, 2007

- **Herald Sun (Australia)**
U.S. Jails Full to Brim but Crime Continues
November 20, 2007 Tuesday

- **Daily Astorian**
Oregon Looks at Prisoners Who Repeat
November 27, 2007
- **Minnesota Pioneer Press**
Taking on Our Teeming Prisons
November 24, 2007
- **The Minnesota Daily**
Report Suggests Prison Reforms Needed
November 27, 2007
- **The Ottawa Citizen**
U.S. Crime Policy Failure Raises Alarm
November 24, 2007
- **Drug War Chronicle**
Sentencing: US Prison Population Could Be Cut in Half with Four Humane Reforms, Including Drug Decriminalization, Report Says
November 23, 2007
- **University of Minnesota News**
U of M Researcher Co-authors Major Report Examining America's Exploding Prison System Population
November 19, 2007
- **Midland Reporter-Telegram**
Editorial: Latest Study on Prisons Full of Errors
November 28, 2007
- **Wausau Daily Herald, Wisconsin**
Editorial: It's Time to Rethink our Crime Strategies
November 25, 2007
- **Orange County Register**
Editorial: Too Many of Us in Prisons: Prison overcrowding reflects tougher sentencing, often for victimless offenses, not more crime
November 26, 2007
- **Inter Press Service**
Billions Spent Locking Up the Poor
November 20, 2007

- **The Jurist**
U.S. Prison Population Up Eight-fold Since 1970: Report
November 20, 2007
- **Op-Ed News**
U.S. Prison Industry Turns into "Gulag" Nightmare For Poor and Minorities
November 19, 2007

TELEVISION

- **ABC News, Good Morning America**
News Headlines
November 20, 2007
- **C-SPAN**
JFA Institute Report on Reducing America's Prison Population
Broadcast entire event live
- **KWTX Television - CBS, Texas**
Report Recommends Major Criminal Justice System Overhaul
November 19, 2007
- **CBS News**
Attended Event, Story not posted online
- **CNN**
Attended Event, Story not posted online

RADIO

- **National Public Radio**
Dueling Studies on the Value of Jail Time
November 20, 2007
- **Minnesota Public Radio**
Prison Reform and the Revolving Door
November 26, 2007
- **Radio Interviews:**
CBS National Radio
KGO Radio San Francisco, CA
KPBS Radio San Diego, CA
Berkeley, CA Station
St. Louis, MO Station

BLOGS

- **Huffington Post**
- **Prevention Works, a blog of the National Crime Prevention Council**
- **Sentencing Law and Policy**
- **Corrections Community**
- **The Van Der Galien Gazette - Netherlands**
- **Thinking Outside the Cage - Colorado**
- **Legal Times**
- **Juvenation**
- **Iowa Independent**



U.S. prison system a costly, harmful failure: report

November 19, 2007

By Randall Mikkelsen

WASHINGTON, Nov 19 (Reuters) - The number of people in U.S. prisons has risen eight-fold since 1970, with little impact on crime but at great cost to taxpayers and society, researchers said in a report calling for a major justice-system overhaul. The report on Monday cites examples ranging from former vice-presidential aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby to a Florida woman's two-year sentence for throwing a cup of coffee to make its case for reducing the U.S. prison population of 2.2 million -- nearly one-fourth of the world's total.

It recommends shorter sentences and parole terms, alternative punishments, more help for released inmates and decriminalizing recreational drugs. It said the steps would cut the prison population in half, save \$20 billion a year and ease social inequality without endangering the public.

But the recommendations run counter to decades of broad U.S. public and political support for getting tough on criminals through longer, harsher prison terms and to the Bush administration's anti-drug and strict-sentencing policies.

"President (George W.) Bush was right," in commuting Libby's perjury sentence this year as excessive, the report said. But he should also have commuted the sentences of hundreds of thousands of other Americans, it said.

"Our contemporary laws and justice system practices exacerbate the crime problem, unnecessarily damage the lives of millions of people (and) waste tens of billions of dollars each year," it said.

The report was produced by the JFA Institute, a Washington criminal-justice research group, and its authors included eight criminologists from major U.S. public universities. It was funded by the Rosenbaum Foundation and by financier and political activist George Soros' Open Society Institute.

The Justice Department dismissed the recommendations and cited findings that about 25 percent of the violent-crime drop in the 1990s can be attributed to increases in imprisonment.

"The United States is experiencing a 30-year low in crime, in large part due to the tough enforcement actions we've taken in the last decade," department spokesman Peter Carr said.

SHIFTING ATTITUDES

But there are signs of shifting attitudes on sentencing policies. Some financially strapped states are shortening sentences and Congress is moving to pass increased help for released prisoners, said Executive Director Marc Mauer of the Sentencing Project, which has advocated alternatives to long sentences.

"Compared to where we were in the mid-(19)90s, it's been a very significant change," Mauer said.

More than 1.5 million people are now in U.S. state and federal prisons, up from 196,429 in 1970, the report said. Another 750,000 people are in local jails. The U.S. incarceration rate is the world's highest, followed by Russia, according to 2006 figures compiled by Kings College in London.

Although the U.S. crime rate began declining in the 1990s it is still about the same as in 1973, the JFA report said. But the prison population has soared because sentences have gotten longer and people who violate parole or probation, even with minor lapses, are more likely to be imprisoned.

"The system is almost feeding on itself now. It takes years and years and years to get out of this system and we do not see any positive impact on the crime rates," JFA President James Austin, a co-author of the report, told a news conference.

The report said the prison population is projected to grow by another 192,000 in five years, at a cost of \$27.5 billion to build and operate additional prisons.

At current rates, one-third of all black males, one-sixth of Latino males, and one in 17 white males will go to prison during their lives. Women represent the fastest-growing segment of the prison population, the report said.

"The massive incarceration of young males from mostly poor- and working-class neighborhoods, and the taking of women from their families and jobs, has crippled their potential for forming healthy families and achieving economic gains," it said.

Investor's Business Daily
Criminal justice overhaul urged
November 19, 2007

A report from the JFA Institute advised shorter sentences, alternative punishments and the decriminalization of recreational drugs in order to reduce the 2.2 mil prison population and save \$20 bil a year. The report from university criminologists was funded by the Rosenbaum Foundation and George Soros.

Washington Times- Event Announcement

Today's headliners

Prison populations — 9:30 a.m. — The JFA Institute holds a forum to release and discuss a report on "Unlocking America: Why and How to Reduce America's Prison Population." Clarence Page, syndicated columnist, and James Austin, president of the JFA Institute, participate. Location: National Press Club, 14th and F streets Northwest, 13th floor. Contact: 202/577-3062.

Herald Sun (Australia)

US jails full to brim but crime continues

November 20, 2007 Tuesday

WASHINGTON -- The number of Americans in prison has risen eight-fold since 1970, with little impact on crime but at great cost to taxpayers and society. Researchers from the JFA Institute, a Washington criminal justice research group, called for a major justice system overhaul.

Their report recommends shorter sentences and parole terms, alternative punishments, more help for released inmates and decriminalising recreational drugs as steps that would cut the prison population in half, save \$22 billion a year and ease social inequality without endangering the public.

The report's recommendations run counter to broad US public support for getting tough on criminals through longer, harsher sentences. More than 1.5 million people were in state and federal prisons, and the number had risen each year from 196,429 in 1970, the report said. Another 750,000 were in police lock-ups.

Although the US crime rate declined in the 1990s and much of this decade, it was still about the same as in 1973, it said. But the prison population had soared because sentences had grown and people who violated parole or probation were more likely to be imprisoned.

"There is no evidence that keeping people in prison longer makes us any safer," said JFA president James Austin, a co-author of the report.

Daily Astorian

Oregon looks at prisoners who repeat

Is our gigantic prison population economically sustainable?

November 27, 2007

If all the people now in American prisons were gathered in one place, they would comprise the nation's fifth-largest city, roughly equal to Philadelphia at 1.6 million. Another 750,000 are in local jails at any given time.

We have more people behind bars than politically repressive China, and the U.S. has 1 billion fewer people.

In 1970, there were fewer than 200,000 people in prison. In a single generation, we've increased this number by a factor of eight. And the number imprisoned is projected to rise by 192,000 in five years, necessitating an additional \$27.5 billion to build and run these warehouses for humans, according to a Pew Charitable Trust analysis.

An Oregon commission is exploring ways to avoid one of the most expensive aspects of our penal system. Gov. Ted Kulongoski wants the Re-Entry Council to coordinate public and private initiatives to curb the number of released prisoners who return to prison within three years. Oregon Corrections Director Max Williams said that cutting recidivism by 1 percent would mean savings of \$2.2 million in corrections costs alone.

In the recently released "Unlocking America" report, the JFA Institute makes a variety of worthy recommendations. Suggested reforms include scrapping current drug-enforcement laws that account for 31 percent of prison admissions, sharp curtailment of re-imprisonment for minor parole violations, and a reexamination of the length of sentences and post-release supervision.

The bottom line is that we need to be smarter about how we achieve the goal of a safe society. We simply must awaken to the fact that what we are doing now isn't sustainable or effective. Gov. Kulongoski's Re-entry Council can be a valuable instrument in re-orienting our focus.

Minnesota Pioneer Press
Taking on our teeming prisons
By Rubén Rosario
November 24, 2007

Hear ye, hear ye. The nation's prison population is swelling. So, this is news?

We've known for a while now that we are the world's undisputed leader in locking up people in prison or jail. That includes Russia and even China, which has more than three times our population. We build more prisons than schools in this country, doncha know?

The public and private prison-construction gravy train keeps rolling along, regardless of whether the crime rate surges, plunges, teeter-totters or levels off. If we build it, the offenders will come. And if they don't, we'll pass more laws or extend them and make sure they do.

Yet here comes another report saying that we're going down the wrong path and that we will be paying the piper if things don't change.

Nine respected criminologists and sociology types - including Joshua Page from the University of Minnesota - argue in the 35-page report that we could save \$20 billion annually and - get this - possibly reduce crime in the process by locking up fewer people. JFA Associates, a Washington think tank that conducts research and policy analysis in the criminal-justice and corrections fields, commissioned the report.

In fact, the report, "Unlocking America: Why and How to Reduce America's Prison Population," notes that the record imprisonment surge has had "numerous unintended consequences, ranging from racial injustice and damage to families and children to worsening public health, civic disengagement, and even increases in crime."

These guys sound a little like those scientists sounding the global warming alarm, the ones making us see red by exhorting us to go green. What do they know? I'll worry about it when I see the Pacific or Atlantic wash up to my Twin Cities doorstep, right?

But let's humor these experts on crime and punishment, just in case they might have a point.

Before it concludes with recommendations, the report lays out some irrefutable facts and other thought-provoking nuggets about crime and the nation's \$200 billion-a-year criminal justice and penal system:

The nation's prison population has increased eightfold since 1970. It keeps going up even though crime rates are at 1973 levels.

For the same crimes, "American prisoners receive sentences twice as long as English prisoners, three times as long as Canadian prisoners, four times as long as Dutch

prisoners, five to 10 times as long as French prisoners, and five times as long as Swedish prisoners."

Most scientific evidence "suggests that there is little if any relationship between fluctuations in crime rates and incarceration rates." The report's analysis found that New York City, along with states such as Connecticut, New Jersey, Ohio and Massachusetts, enjoyed declining crime rates while they were also reducing jail and prison populations.

"This generation-long growth of imprisonment has occurred not because of growing crime rates, but because of changes in sentencing policy that resulted in dramatic increases in the proportion of felony convictions resulting in prison sentences and in the length-of-stay in prison that those sentences required," the report states.

The report underlines a major trend fueling the prison surge: the rising portion of the prison population involving mostly nonviolent drug offenders imprisoned for technical violations of their parole or probation. According to the report, more than half of all annual admissions to state prisons involve such parole or probation violators.

"For those that suggest that by incarcerating people for non-felony crimes or noncompliance with the terms of probation or parole we are preventing more serious crimes to occur, there is no scientific data to support such a claim," the report states.

"These data clearly suggest that we are spending a great deal of money and wasting a large amount of prison space on people who fail to comply with parole and probation supervision rules and who have not committed new crimes," the authors said.

The report's recommendations include:

Reduce time served in prison. They don't mean the Hannibal Lecters of the world. It's more about offenders like Jessica Hall, an unemployed mother of three with a husband serving in Iraq who got 24 months in the slammer for tossing a cup of ice at another driver's vehicle during a road-rage incident in Fairfax County, Va. Although prosecutors pushed for her to serve the entire two-year prison sentence, a judge sentenced her to time served - seven weeks in jail - and suspended the rest of her two-year term.

Eliminate the use of prisons for technical violations of parole or probation, and reduce their lengths.

Decriminalize "victimless" crimes, particularly those related to drug use and abuse.

Implementing those and other initiatives, the authors contend, will annually free up substantial money to invest in crime prevention and early intervention efforts that may curtail or prevent behaviors that lead to criminal behavior.

"I understand fully well that if you do the crime, you do the time," said Page, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota and director of an ongoing study on the reintegration of juvenile offenders into society.

"Absolutely. Punishment can serve as a positive social function," Page said. "But that punishment should be proportional to what the offender did."

Good luck. I've never seen a politician or key policymaker risk re-election or reappointment by arguing that we need fewer offenders locked up.

Consider the Minnesota lawmaker who came up with the really lame "Halloween night" measure to draft a law to specifically deal with sexual offenders caught preying on trick-or-treaters on that one day.

There are already laws on the books to deal with that. But hey, let's take the idiotic but simple approach.

Page understands the immense challenge of changing public perception while trying to prevent such a report from landing in a wastebasket or gathering dust on a government office bookshelf or window ledge.

"I'm not naive to think that a politician is going to pick this up and embrace it as his or her six-point plan for changing the system," Page said. "But we are not political hacks. We don't work for a lobby group. We do believe we have perspective, though. We are trying to be as public as we can be about what's going on and what needs change."

Hear ye, hear ye.

The Minnesota Daily

Report suggests prison reforms needed

The United States jails 737 of every 100,000 people, the highest rate in the world.

By Emma Carew

November 27, 2007

A major report released by the JFA Institute in Washington on Nov. 19 suggests significant reforms to the national prison system in attempt to end 30 years of exponential population growth.

According to the report, titled "Unlocking America," there were 196,000 people in American prisons in 1972, compared to 1.4 million today.

The United States leads the world in incarceration levels, with 737 people per 100,000 currently in prison or jail. The second highest rate, in Russia, is 581 per 100,000.

Sonoski Professor of Law and Public Policy Michael Tonry said in the 1980s, Minnesota "had relatively socially healthy policies toward punishment."

In the early 1990s, the state Legislature began passing "morally based" and "incredibly severe" laws on drug crimes, which have led to a rapid increase of Minnesota prisoners, he said.

The authors of "Unlocking America" offer four solutions to the prison population problem, one of which is the decriminalization of lesser drug-related crimes.

The report states that "a large group of people are currently serving time for behaviors that have been criminalized to protect people from themselves."

Joshua Page, assistant professor of sociology and contributing author to "Unlocking America," said the authors believe lower-level drug-related criminals should be diverted to treatment programs rather than prison.

"(It) isn't about the prison system itself," he said. "It's about sentencing, how we sentence people, and what we do with parole violators."

In Minnesota, about a quarter of inmates are incarcerated for drug-related crimes, Tonry said.

In the 1990s, the rising prison populations were fueled by crack and cocaine offenders. And since 2000, the popularization of methamphetamine has only added to the increasing populations.

"It's kind of a double whammy," Tonry said, because the state had not found a way to reduce the cocaine offenders before methamphetamine use went on the rise.

"The problem here is mindlessly severe drug penalties," Tonry said.

Dan Storkamp, director of information and technology for the Minnesota Department of Corrections, said there are about 9,500 people in Minnesota prisons, and the population is expected to rise to about 10,000 by 2011.

The Department Of Corrections is expanding three existing facilities to address the rising prison populations. It expects to have adequate inmate space through 2015.

According to a department report on state prison populations, the state has seen an increase in probation and supervised release violators.

Storkamp said one of the ways the department is addressing this issue is through the Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Plan, a program that prepares inmates to be "law-abiding and successful" after their release.

Tonry said he thinks more emphasis needs to be placed on continued treatment for inmates once they are reintroduced into the community.

Internal prison treatment programs are only effective for people who "are very quickly placed into the appropriate next stage of that level of drug treatment," he said.

"Most people who are in prison are not there because they are exceedingly good managers of their own lives," Tonry said. "There are chances that people who are released from prison will fall into a crack."

The Ottawa Citizen
U.S. crime policy failure raises alarm

By Don Butler
November 24, 2007

As Parliament prepares to pass Criminal Code changes that would lengthen penalties and expand mandatory minimum sentences, a new report says the U.S. experience with similar measures has been a costly waste of money.

Due largely to tough-on-crime policies, the Unlocking America report says, there are now eight times as many people in U.S. prisons and jails as there were in 1970.

Yet the crime rate today in the U.S. is about the same as it was in 1973, and there's little evidence that the imprisonment binge has had much impact on crime, says the report by the JFA Institute, a Washington-based organization that does criminal justice research. In fact, the U.S. states with the lowest incarceration rates generally have the lowest crime rates, it says.

Since 1990, the growth in U.S. prison populations has been driven by longer sentences, including mandatory minimum sentences and laws that require offenders to serve most of their sentences in prison.

The report calls on U.S. lawmakers to embark on a program of "decarceration" by shortening sentences, eliminating the use of prison for technical violations of parole or probation, and decriminalizing "victimless" crimes such as drug offences. The recommendations run directly counter to measures in the Harper government's omnibus crime bill.

The Harper tough-on-crime bill increases mandatory minimum sentences for a variety of violent offences and includes reverse onus provisions that could keep repeat violent offenders behind bars for life.

The bill, which the government has designated as a matter of confidence, is expected to receive third reading before the House rises Dec. 14.

The report's proposals also fly in the face of legislation introduced this week that would provide mandatory minimum penalties for various drug crimes and double the maximum penalty for cannabis production to 14 years.

Critics accuse the government of relying on the same tough-on-crime strategies that have failed in the U.S.

"We hopefully don't want to start importing crime policies that have been demonstrated to be ineffective and counter-productive in the United States," says Don Stuart, a law professor at Queen's University.

Rather than looking for effective ways to deal with crime, says University of Toronto criminologist Tony Doob, the government has opted for simple changes in the criminal law that "obviously aren't going to do anything. But they sell the public on the idea that these things are going to be effective." Unlocking America's nine authors are leading U.S. criminologists and sociologists who have spent their careers studying crime and punishment. "We are convinced that we need a different strategy," they say.

With 2.2 million people behind bars on any given day, the U.S. leads the world in imprisonment. China, with 1.5 million imprisoned, is second.

U.S. taxpayers now spend more than \$60 billion a year on corrections, says the report. "The net result is an expensive system that relies much too heavily on imprisonment, is increasingly ineffective and diverts large sums of taxpayers' money from more effective crime control strategies." Much of the burden has fallen on disadvantaged minorities. Blacks and Latinos make up 60 per cent of the U.S.'s prison population. According to the report, eight per cent of American black men of working age are now behind bars. "In effect, the imprisonment binge created our own American apartheid," it says.

"At current rates, one-third of all black males, one-sixth of Latino males and one in 17 white males will go to prison during their lives. Incarceration rates this high are a national tragedy." U.S. prisoners receive sentences that are twice as long as British prisoners, three times as long as Canadian prisoners and five-to-10 times as long as French prisoners, the report says. "Yet these countries' rates of violent crime are lower than ours." Since the early 1990s, U.S. crime rates have fallen sharply and are now about 40 per cent below their peak. The report says it's "tempting" to conclude that this decline occurred because incarceration rates soared during the same period.

But a "large number of studies" contradict that claim, it says. "Most scientific evidence suggests that there is little if any relationship between fluctuations in crime rates and incarceration rates." In fact, in many cases, crime rates have risen or fallen independent of imprisonment rates, it says. "New York City, for example, has produced one of the nation's largest declines in crime in the nation while significantly reducing its jail and prison populations." The report draws three conclusions about imprisonment's effect on crime: if there is one at all, it's small; it diminishes as prison populations expand; and the "overwhelming and undisputed negative side effects of incarceration far outweigh its

potential, unproven, benefits." Incarceration in the U.S., it says, has had numerous unintended consequences, ranging from racial injustice and damage to families to civic disengagement and worsening public health.

Incarceration can even increase crime, the report says. One study found that after incarceration passes a certain tipping point, it becomes counter-productive. "When too many men are removed from a community, family and social life are destabilized, leading to higher crime rates."

Drug War Chronicle

Sentencing: US Prison Population Could Be Cut in Half With Four Humane Reforms, Including Drug Decriminalization, Report Says

November 23, 2007

The United States, home of the world's largest prison population, both per capita and in real terms, could save \$20 billion a year and cut that population in half by adopting a handful of systemic reforms, including decriminalizing drug possession, said a prestigious group of social scientists in a report released Monday. Noting that the US prison population had grown eightfold since 1970, steadily increasing whether crimes rates were going up or down, the report called US prisons a "self-fueling system."

The report, *Unlocking America* was released by the JFA Institute, a Washington, DC, research organization that studies issues related to corrections and penal populations. It was authored by eight prominent criminologists and James Austin, president of JFA.

The massive increase in imprisonment in the past four decades has had little impact on crime, but has imposed substantial costs on society -- and on offenders and their families, the report found. "Our contemporary laws and justice system practices exacerbate the crime problem, unnecessarily damage the lives of millions of people (and) waste tens of billions of dollars each year," it said.

Referring to President Bush's pardon of disgraced former White House aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the report noted: "President Bush was right. A prison sentence for Lewis "Scooter" Libby was excessive -- so too was the long three year probation term. But while he was at it, President Bush should have commuted the sentences of hundreds of thousands of Americans who each year have also received prison sentences for crimes that pose little if any danger or harm to our society."

Those people are the victims of what the authors described as "three key myths" that drive criminal justice policy: That there are "career criminals" who can be identified and imprisoned to reduce crime, that tougher penalties are needed to protect the public from "dangerous criminals," and that tougher penalties will deter criminals. The authors devote extensive space to debunking those policy-driving misconceptions.

"The system is almost feeding on itself now. It takes years and years and years to get out of this system and we do not see any positive impact on the crime rates," Austin, a coauthor of the report, told a news conference.

A more humane, less expensive, and greatly reduced prison system could be achieved by enacting four fundamental reforms, the report concluded. They are:

Reduce time served in prison.

Eliminate the use of prison for parole or probation technical violators.

Reduce the length of parole and probation supervision periods.

Decriminalize "victimless" crimes, particularly those related to drug use and abuse.

Regarding decriminalizing drug offenses, the report noted: "In recent years, behaviors have been criminalized that are not dangerous and pose little if any threat to others. A large group of people are currently serving time for behaviors that have been criminalized to protect people from themselves. Their offenses involved the consent of all immediate parties to the transaction. Common examples in American history have included abortion, gambling, illicit sexual conduct that does not involve coercion (e.g., prostitution and, until recently, homosexual activity), and the sale and possession of recreational drugs. According to the US Department of Justice, approximately 30-40% of all current prison admissions involve crimes that have no direct or obvious victim other than the perpetrator. The drug category constitutes the largest offense category, with 31% of all prison admissions resulting from such crimes."

The drug war is futile and has nasty collateral consequences, the report concluded.

"Every time a dealer is taken out of circulation by a prison sentence, a new dealer is drawn in by the lure of large profits. The prosecution and imprisonment of low-level traffickers has increased racial disparities, and is the largest factor contributing to the rapid rise in imprisonment rates for women. Dealers' use of violence to eliminate competition helps to sustain the myth linking drug use to violence. Notwithstanding our extraordinary effort to discourage the use and sale of illegal drugs, they remain widely available and widely used."

Better than a prison-filling policy of prohibition, would be a regulatory approach to drugs, the report said. "Regulatory approaches, such as are now used for drugs that are not illegal should be given serious consideration. The success of recent referenda in several states allowing medical use of marijuana suggests that the public opinion may be changing."

Public opinion would change even faster if more people read this report. It is a scathing indictment of a failed and inhumane set of criminal justice and drug policies. \$20 billion a year in savings from adopting the suggested reforms is easily quantifiable; the reduction in human suffering by reducing the prison population in half, while equally significant, is not so easily measured.

University of Minnesota News

U of M researcher co-authors major report examining America's exploding prison system population

November 19, 2007

Mark Cassutt, University News Service

MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL -- A major report examining America's exploding prison system population will be released today at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The report, co-authored by nine leading criminology and penal experts, including Joshua Page, University of Minnesota assistant professor of sociology, recommends significant reforms to the criminal justice system in order to reduce the prison population. Recommendations include reducing length of stay in prison and eliminating prison time for technical parole and probation violations.

The National Press Club event will include a panel discussion with experts from the corrections, sentencing and academic and public policy fields, moderated by nationally syndicated columnist Clarence Page.

The number of people serving sentences in state and federal prisons in the United States has grown from 196,000 in 1972 to more than 1.4 million today, with 2.2 million Americans in prison or jail on any given day. The number continues to rise and shows no signs of leveling off, costing the country billions in prison operations and construction costs.

The report's recommendations, if implemented nationally, would gradually and safely reduce the nation's prison and jail populations by half and generate annual savings of \$20 billion, money that could be reinvested in more promising crime-prevention strategies. The report is being released by the JFA Institute, a Washington nonprofit organization focused on research-based solutions to criminal justice issues.

Midland Reporter-Telegram

Editorial: Latest study on prisons full of errors

November 28, 2007

There is a recent privately funded study that is recommending some sweeping changes in the way we operate our prison system and we find some of the leanings in the study as moving toward dangerous ground.

The report was produced by the JFA Institute, a Washington criminal-justice research group, and its authors included eight criminologists from major U.S. public universities. It was funded by the Rosenbaum Foundation and financier George Soros's Open Society Institute.

As far as the study goes, we agree on the basis of fact. The number of Americans in prison has risen eight-fold since 1970, with little impact on crime but at great cost to taxpayers and society. That is hard to dispute on any level.

Where dispute arises, however, is in the approach we take in solving key issues pertaining to the fact. The study calls for a major justice-system overhaul. It is in error, however, on how to proceed in that direction.

The truth is that prison reform is constantly under way. It is fact that our prisons of today are much different than they were 100 years ago. It also can be argued the changes that have occurred have produced both positive and negative results. That is why it is important to keep exploring methods to improve the system and the rehabilitative nature of the process.

The report recommends shorter sentences and parole terms, alternative punishments, more help for released inmates and decriminalizing recreational drugs as steps that would cut the prison population in half, save \$20 billion a year and ease social inequality without endangering the public.

We certainly need to explore some of these avenues as we move forward, but falling into the trap of decriminalization of crimes is a wrong path to follow and this is a stance we have made before and will continue to do so.

As a society, we must take a stand on certain issues and we will not prevail as a superior society if we lessen our attack on the use of illegal drugs or other crimes that "pose no harm to our society."

Let's just take the use of illegal drugs as a starting point. How can such a learned study come to the conclusion that such crimes are not harmful to society? Every study we've seen shows massive negative effects on society at every turn in both costs and ultimate quality of life.

Yes, we need to continue to seek ways to limit jail populations across the nation, but decriminalization of crimes is not a good starting point.

Wausau Daily Herald, Wisconsin
Editorial: It's time to rethink our crime strategies
November 25, 2007

In Wausau, taxpayers are being asked to foot the bill for more police officers to patrol our streets.

Everyone in Marathon County will have to pay for the additional Sheriff's Department staff -- deputies and dispatchers -- that are being proposed.

We've already added more prosecutors and two new judges and court staffs in recent years, and then there's the jail: It's bursting at the seams just eight years after a \$6.1 million, 110-bed expansion that was intended to meet our needs for years to come. The jail's average daily population increased 75 percent between 1998 and 2005, and a consultant has suggested that by 2030, the facility will have to be three times as big as it is now to accommodate the number of people we throw in the slammer.

At this critical juncture, as we debate whether to spend taxpayer money on more cops, more dispatchers, more court staff and more jail cells, it's imperative that we ask ourselves what we're getting for our investment.

And a landmark study released last week gives us a straightforward answer: Not much. According to the study, nearly one-quarter of all the inmates in the world are behind bars in the United States. Our prison population has risen eight-fold since 1970, which has cost taxpayers trillions of dollars and had a devastating impact on society and our culture. But the effort has had little impact at all on crime.

The report was produced by the JFA Institute, a Washington criminal-justice research group, and its authors were eight criminologists from major universities. It was funded by the Rosenbaum Foundation and by financier and political activist George Soros' Open Society Institute.

It found that the 2.2 million U.S. inmates are sitting in cells thanks to decades of "get-tough" strategies such as stiffer sentences, the abolition of parole in some states, and a war on drugs that has sent tens of thousands of people to jail and prison without reducing the availability of controlled substances.

"Our contemporary laws and justice system practices exacerbate the crime problem, unnecessarily damage the lives of millions of people (and) waste tens of billions of dollars each year," the report said.

Certainly there have been other criminal justice studies that have said just the opposite. And the Justice Department pointed to some of those reviews last week when it said that about 25 percent of the violent-crime drop in the 1990s could be attributed to increases in imprisonment.

"The United States is experiencing a 30-year low in crime, in large part due to the tough enforcement actions we've taken in the last decade," department spokesman Peter Carr told reporters.

That may be true. But even with the drop in crime seen during the 1990s, the JFA report says that overall crime rates today are about the same as they were in 1973, before the

whole "get tough on crime" movement.

Since then, the U.S. prison population has soared because sentences have gotten longer and people who violate parole or probation, even for minor violations, are more likely to be imprisoned, the report found.

"The system is almost feeding on itself now. It takes years and years and years to get out of this system and we do not see any positive impact on the crime rates," JFA President James Austin, a co-author of the report, told a news conference.

So where does that leave us? With the world's highest incarceration rate and a prison population projected to grow by an additional 192,000 in five years, at a cost of \$27.5 billion to build and operate additional prisons.

And it all starts in municipalities, where the inmate boom starts with cries for more cops, longer sentences and tougher laws.

Insanity, it is said, can be defined as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. By that definition, the nation's crime strategy is insane. We keep locking people up -- at a rate higher than that even in Russia -- with devastating social and financial costs and no real success.

The report recommends things that will be tough to swallow: shorter sentences; a return to parole systems; more alternative punishments; more help for released inmates; and the decriminalization of recreational drugs.

It said the steps would cut the prison population in half, save \$20 billion a year and ease social inequality without endangering the public, the report found.

Some people will find those suggestions insane. But what's more insane, spending billions of dollars a year on a failed strategy, or critically examining our criminal justice system and rebuilding it into something that makes sense?

Orange County Register

Editorial: Too many of us in prisons

Prison overcrowding reflects tougher sentencing, often for victimless offenses, not more crime

November 26, 2007

It was more than a year ago that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger looked at the 175,000 prisoners crammed into a state prison system built for half as many and proclaimed a state of emergency.

So far, this emergency has been addressed largely in terms of prison "supply" more beds. As we have argued before in these pages, a truly comprehensive solution for California's

prison overcrowding must focus also on reducing prison "demand": reducing the number of criminals by reforming sentences for those lawbreakers who don't threaten public safety. But lest our readers think these suggestions are unique, a research institute that works closely with corrections departments around the country conducted an analysis of the nation as a whole, and it found both the same problem and the same necessary solution.

California's jails hold one of every 200 Californians, at an annual cost to taxpayers that rivals that of the state's university system. But as the report issued last week by the JFA Institute demonstrates, this follows the pattern of the nation as a whole, which now warehouses 2.2 million prisoners at a cost of \$100 billion a year: a tenfold increase from three decades ago.

JFA Institute, based in Washington, D.C., works with various levels of government and philanthropic agencies to evaluate criminal-justice policies and design research-based policy solutions (www.JFA-associates.com).

Who are these 2.2 million people? Among them are Elisa Kelly and George Robinson, sentenced to 27 months in prison for hosting a drinking party for their son's nine friends in their own home. There's Jessica Hall, sentenced to 24 months for throwing a cup of McDonald's coffee at a car that cut her off. And then there are the hundreds of thousands of people imprisoned for nonviolent drug crimes.

As these examples suggest, and the JFA report demonstrates with statistical evidence, the primary reason for overcrowded prisons is not an explosion of crime, but an explosion of prison sentences. Not only are these sentences many times the length of those for equivalent crimes in other industrialized nations, they are "significantly longer than they were in earlier periods in our penal history." The result is greater expense for less effect, as is testified by rates of recidivism and crime alike.

The JFA Institute argues that its recommendations would save the U.S. Taxpayer \$20 billion a year and, eventually, reduce prison rolls by half. Certainly, they represent the real reforms that California and America as a whole need: reducing sentences, eliminating the use of prison for parole violators, reducing parole and probation supervision periods and, most importantly, decriminalizing victimless crimes, particularly those related to drug use and abuse.

Inter Press Service

RIGHTS-US: Billions Spent Locking Up the Poor

By Abra Pollock

November 20, 2007

WASHINGTON (IPS) - Hardnosed sentencing policies that have caused the U.S. prison population to soar over the past three decades have done little to reduce crime, but have

devastated low-income, minority communities, according to a report released here Monday.

Titled "Unlocking America: Why and How to Reduce America's Prison Population", the report found that the U.S. prison population has increased nearly eightfold since 1973 -- 196,429 to 1.5 million -- while crime rates have remained virtually the same. If sentencing policies aren't adjusted, the 40-page report said, the prison population over the next five years will swell by another 192,000 prisoners, costing an additional 27.5 billion dollars in construction and operational costs on top of the 60 billion dollars already spent annually on corrections.

"Our contemporary laws and justice system practices exacerbate the crime problem, unnecessarily damage the lives of millions of people, waste tens of billions of dollars each year, and create less than ideal social and economic conditions in many sections of our largest American cities," said the report, which was co-authored by nine leading criminologists and penal experts and coordinated by the criminal justice research group JFA Associates.

Experts attribute the surge in U.S. prison population numbers to a shift in policies and attitudes originating in the 1960s and early 1970s that favoured a "tough on crime" approach resulting in longer and harsher sentencing.

Responding to an increase in crime during the 1960s, politicians scrambled to win votes by adopting this stance, explained New York University professor David F. Greenberg and one of the report's authors.

Mandatory sentencing is just one example of a "tough on crime" policy arising out of this era. In mandatory sentencing, adopted first by the state of California in 1973, certain crimes are linked with a minimum number of years' imprisonment, such as 15 years for possession of a "hard" illegal drug -- leaving the judge with no flexibility in sentencing.

"Many of these policies have been politically inspired," according to Marc Mauer, executive director of the Sentencing Project, a national organisation whose mission is to promote fairness and effectiveness in the criminal justice system, and who spoke on a panel at the report's release on Monday.

In comparison with other Western countries, the same crimes in the U.S. are often met with much harsher sentences. U.S. prisoners receive sentences twice as long as English prisoners, three times as long as Canadian prisoners, four times as long as Dutch prisoners, and five to 10 times as long as French prisoners, the report said. Yet each of these countries has a lower rate of violent crime than the United States.

"If putting people in prison was the way to create a safe society, then we should be the safest society in the world," Mauer said. "And that's clearly not the case."

Furthermore, the U.S.'s bloated sentencing policies have had a devastating impact on

low-income minority communities, the report highlighted. Incarceration rates for African-Americans and Latinos are more than six times higher than for whites, and 60 percent of the prison population is either black or Latino.

At current rates, the report said, one-third of all African-American males will go to prison in their lives.

This racial makeup of the U.S. prison population "should be setting off alarm bells", Mauer said.

As Greenberg and other experts see it, the disproportionately high number of African-American and Latino males in prison contributes to a "vicious cycle" of social breakdown.

"At a certain point, you're taking so many people out of low-income, minority neighbourhoods that you're disrupting the fabric of those communities, taking father figures out of children's lives," Greenberg said.

To counteract the high social and economic costs of the current U.S. prison system, the report outlined a series of recommendations, including an increased emphasis on community-based therapeutic programmes to avert the behaviours that lead to imprisonment, such as substance abuse.

According to the U.S. Justice Department, 30 to 40 percent of current prison admissions are "victimless" crimes, meaning that the criminal act poses little or no threat to others. Drug-related offenses comprise 31 percent of all prison admissions within this category.

Beyond community-based therapeutic care, policymakers must take action with regards to reforming U.S. sentencing laws, as well as on policies related to re-entry for prisoners who have completed their terms, the report said.

Reducing sentences, eliminating the use of prison for parole or probation violators, and decriminalising "victimless" crimes were all offered as policy alternatives to the status quo.

Current laws that exclude ex-prisoners from receiving welfare, public housing, and other subsidies should be revisited, the report said. In order to help ex-prisoners integrate back into society, subsidies could be offered to government agencies to hire ex-prisoners, thereby helping to diminish any hesitations these employers may have.

"Our recommendations would reestablish practices that were the norm in America for most of the previous century, when incarceration rates were a fraction of what they are today," said the report.

Advocates for prison reform hope that this research will inspire policymakers who have been intimidated in the past by a "tough on crime" political climate to instead raise their

voices in favour of reducing incarceration rates.

"It's one thing to 'act tough' [on crime], but that doesn't necessarily mean increasing results in public safety," Mauer said. "This report is grounded in trying to look at what works -- and what doesn't work."

The Jurist

US prison population up eight-fold since 1970: report

By Mike Rosen-Molina

November 20, 2007

[JURIST] The US prison population is currently eight times as high as it was in 1970, but zealous prosecution and tough sentencing guidelines have done little to curb crime, according to a report [PDF text] released Monday by the JFA Institute [advocacy website], a Washington criminal justice research group. The report said:

Proponents of prison expansion have heralded this growth as a smashing success. But a large number of studies contradict that claim. Most scientific evidence suggests that there is little if any relationship between fluctuations in crime rates and incarceration rates. In many cases, crime rates have risen or declined independent of imprisonment rates. New York City, for example, has produced one of the nation's largest declines in crime in the nation while significantly reducing its jail and prison populations. Connecticut, New Jersey, Ohio, and Massachusetts have also reduced their prison populations during the same time that crime rates were declining.

The report called for a major retooling of the US criminal justice system and recommended implementing new policies to reduce the prison population, including shorter sentences and the decriminalization of certain recreational drugs, arguing that these measures would "save \$20 billion a year and ease social inequality without endangering the public." According to Reuters, a US Justice Department [official website] spokesman disputed the report's findings and argued that tough-on-crime tactics were responsible for a 25 percent drop in violent crime in the 1990s. Reuters has more.

Rising numbers of inmates in US prisons has been a concern for years. The US prison and jail population added prisoners [press release; JURIST report] from mid-2004 to mid-2005 at a rate of 2.6 percent and more than 1,000 new inmates a week, reaching a total of 2,186,230 inmates behind bars according to a Justice Department Bureau of Justice Statistics [official website] report [summary; PDF text] released last year. The racial makeup of the prison population remained steady, but the number of women incarcerated in the US for a period of over a year saw a large upswing, growing 757 percent between 1997 and 2004 [JURIST report], according to a report [text] released by the Women's Prison Association

Op-Ed News

US Prison Industry Turns into "Gulag" Nightmare For Poor and Minorities

By T. M. Elkins

November 19, 2007 at 21:24:16

A recent Reuters news article reports that in a new report by the JFA Institute, a Washington criminal-justice research group, researchers recently called the US prison system a "costly, harmful failure", and recommended "shorter sentences and parole terms, alternative punishments, more help for released inmates and decriminalizing recreational drugs as steps to cut the prison population in half, save \$20 billion a year and ease social inequality without endangering the public. "

Just how bad is the US prison system? For one thing, it's entirely bloated with inmates. The United States is now in the unenviable position of having the world's highest incarceration rate, followed by Russia, according to 2006 figures compiled by Kings College in London.

Duncan Campbell, in the Los Angeles Times, states, "Anger grows as America jails its two millionth inmate. The land of the free is now home to 25% of the entire world's prison population."

America now has a gulag-type system, overfull with nonviolent offenders and petty criminals who make up the bulk of its population. The JFA report cites, among other things, the example of a woman in Florida now serving a "two-year sentence for throwing a cup of coffee".

Despite repeated criticism from experts from a variety of fields, including law enforcement, politicians continue to emphasize "get tough on crime", and states continue to build enormous prisons, at huge cost to taxpayers and society. Indeed, the prison "industry" has become America's second largest industry, with many states allowing "privatised" prisons to take over the duty of housing, clothing a feeding prisoners. By 1996, one out of four adults in America owed their employment to America's prison industry.

Meanwhile, these "privatized prisons" are raking in millions of dollars for their owners. Who foots the bill? American taxpayers, many of them relatives of those who are being imprisoned for parking fines, speeding or passing bad checks.

The new JFA Institute report said the prison population is projected to grow by another 192,000 in five years, which is expected to cost taxpayers \$27.5 billion to build and operate additional prisons- this at a time in which less money is available for education, healthcare or infrastructure. While millions of law-abiding Americans lack basic necessities such as food, shelter and clothing, the prison industry is still going strong.

Reuters reported, "Although the U.S. crime rate began declining in the 1990s it is still about the same as in 1973, the JFA report said. But the prison population has soared because sentences have gotten longer and people who violate parole or probation, even with minor lapses, are more likely to be imprisoned."

" 'The system is almost feeding on itself now. It takes years and years and years to get out of this system and we do not see any positive impact on the crime rates,' JFA President James Austin, a co-author of the report, told a news conference."

There have been "decades of broad U.S. public and political support for getting tough on criminals through longer, harsher prison terms", resulting in a phenomenal increase in the number of prisoners. Since the 1970's, the number of prisoners has been rising steadily. In 1980, the US jail population was 500,000. By 1987 or so, it doubled to 1,000,000. By 2000 it has surpassed 2,000,000. At this rate, given a rough estimate of 300 million people living in the USA, everyone will be incarcerated by the year 2057....if the US still exists by then, of course.

The "get tough" rhetoric employed by lawmakers and politicians carries with it an insidious side- the spectre of racism. Politicians began using "crime hysteria" in the 1970's and 80's as a campaign tactic, often alluding to race by using "code words" to refer to black criminals. With the increasing decline in well-paid jobs and a general malaise in the economy causing the gap between poor and rich to rise, it was necessary to find an outlet for white middle-class rage. Politicians found it easy to avoid addressing domestic anxieties by using poor, disenfranchised minorities as "scapegoats", just as now immigrants and muslims are being targeted.

According to the San Jose Mercury News, "Today, "thousands of young black men are serving long prison sentences for selling cocaine -- a drug that was virtually unobtainable in black neighborhoods before members of the CIA's army brought it into South-Central in the 1980s at bargain- basement prices."

While the US government under Ronald Reagan imported tons of cocaine to the US through the CIA in the 1980's, new laws, such as NY's Rockefeller drug laws, were used as a pretext to lock up huge numbers of drug dealers- all of them working for the CIA.

Because of these punitive drug-sentencing laws, minorities have borne the brunt of nefarious mandatory minimum sentencing policies. According to researchers, "At current rates, one-third of all black males, one-sixth of Latino males, and one in 17 white males will go to prison during their lives."

The cost to society, in terms of social breakdown, poverty, mental and physical health, is incalculable. Many of those who are released find it nearly impossible to return to society and find work. They then become a burden to society. Worse yet, the report notes that, "Women represent the fastest-growing segment of the prison population. The result is increased social and racial inequality." Sometimes these women give birth in prison, and, unable to care for their children, they are forced to send their children into foster care.

"The massive incarceration of young males from mostly poor- and working-class neighborhoods, and the taking of women from their families and jobs, has crippled their potential for forming healthy families and achieving economic gains," it said.

The article stated that there are some "signs of shifting attitudes on sentencing policies". According to Marc Mauer, Executive Director of the Sentencing Project, "Some financially strapped states are shortening sentences and Congress is moving toward bipartisan passage of increased help for released prisoners. Compared to where we were in the mid-(19)90s, it's been a very significant change."

However, these local changes don't go far enough. The JFA report recommends cutting the prison population in half in order to save \$20 billion a year- money that could be better used on social and domestic problems.

"President (George W.) Bush was right," in commuting Libby's perjury sentence this year as excessive, the report says. "But while he was at it, President Bush should have commuted the sentences of hundreds of thousands of Americans who each year have also received prison sentences for crimes that pose little if any danger or harm to our society."

Will there be a change in the US policy anytime soon? It doesn't look like it. As a matter of fact, now that the Bush administration is going ahead with its plan to build gulag- style concentration camps (in a special contract issued to Dick Cheney's Halliburton), it looks as if the US is in line to become the new Soviet Union- with an impressive array of work camps for immigrants, muslims, "thought crime" prisoners, dissidents or who knows what else.

TELEVISION

ABC News – Good Morning America News Headlines

November 20, 2007

ANCHORS: DIANE SAWYER, ROBIN ROBERTS

REPORTERS: CHRIS CUOMO (NEW YORK, NY USA)

DIANE SAWYER (ABC NEWS)

Chris Cuomo has the news.

CHRIS CUOMO (ABC NEWS)

All right, thanks, Diane. And good morning again, everyone.

GRAPHICS: PRISON POPULATION

CHRIS CUOMO (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) A new report finds putting more people in prison for longer sentences does not reduce the overall crime rate in the United States.

CHRIS CUOMO (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) The study by a criminal justice research group recommends alternative punishments and decriminalizing some drug behavior to reduce the prison population, which has increased eight folds since 1970. But the Justice Department dismisses the recommendation, citing a decrease in violent crime in the 1990s.

C-SPAN

[JFA Institute Report on Reducing America's Prison Population](#)

(Click link to watch video)

Sen. James Webb (D-VA) delivers a video speech on reducing prison populations as part of the JFA Institute's report release event at the Nat'l Press Club. The report on prison policy, put together by nine leading criminologists, calls for changes in the criminal justice system, including shorter prison stays.

1 hr. 34 min.: CSPAN3

KWTX Television, Texas

Report Recommends Major Criminal Justice System Overhaul

November 19, 2007

With an overloaded prison population in America's jails, a report released Monday recommends a major overhaul of the criminal system.

James Austin, president of the JFA Institute, said the report - worked on by nine leading experts in criminology and penalties - reveals that America's prisons are overloaded and in many cases inundated with prisoners that don't need to be there.

It's something that Austin, who co-authored the study, said puts a tremendous strain on the prison system, and he said one of the recommendations is to stop sending those on probation or parole to prison for petty offenses.

"We want to eliminate or ban the use of prison for probation and parole technical violators. In other words you could not come to prison in our world unless you've been arrested and convicted of a felony. That is what prison is for. Not showing up for your drug treatment, not showing up for your probation officer visit, not holding a job is not something you should go to prison for, but we are sending tens of thousands of people back to prison for those reasons," he said.

The JFA Institute is a non-profit organization that works with federal, state and local government agencies to evaluate criminal justice practices and whether or not they are working.

In the case of the study, Austin said it is estimated that the prison population could drop by some 500,000 inmates just by shortening the length of incarceration for some inmates.

"The prison population today is about 1.5 million. if we could get that length of stay back to where it was that population would drop by about 500,000 just on the length of stay. Just on the length of stay,"

Austin said there is very little correlation between offenders who have served their time and an increase in crime.

He said it's actually the next generation of males between the ages of 15 to 24 that are responsible for an increase in crime, and that's why it makes more sense to decrease the time of incarceration for some offenders to free up space in the already overcrowded prisons.

"So who is being arrested? it s the next generation of males aged 15 to 24. So how we raise them, how we take care of them has a lot more to do with what the crime rate is going to be then whether or not we incarcerate or we lengthen the time of imprisonment," he said.

RADIO

National Public Radio

Dueling Studies on the Value of Jail Time

To listen: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16451332&sc=emaf>
November 20, 2007

The Bryant Park Project · New research from the Open Society Institute says that U.S. prisons are bursting at the seams for no good reason and at a great cost to taxpayers. A Justice Department study disagrees.

Minnesota Public Radio

Prison reform and the revolving door

November 26, 2007

A recent report suggests that prisons are becoming overcrowded and that treatment may not be as good a solution to prevent offenders from returning as changing sentencing laws. Midmorning examines in-prison treatment and asks why states should bother.

BLOGS

Huffington Post

This Thanksgiving, Most of All

November 22, 2007

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeralyn-merritt/this-thanksgiving-most-o b 73843.html>

Like most Americans, I have a lot to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. What I'm most thankful for is that I'm not in jail eating processed turkey on a plastic plate.

I'm thinking about the children of the incarcerated. There are more than 2.4 million kids with parents languishing in our jails and prisons due to legislators who insist on being tough rather than smart on crime. America, Prison Nation, has been a costly and harmful failure.

The number of Americans in prison has risen eight-fold since 1970, with little impact on crime but at great cost to taxpayers and society, researchers said in a report calling for a major justice-system overhaul. The report, by the JFA Institute, a Washington criminal-justice research group, "included eight criminologists from major U.S. public universities" among its authors.

The report said the prison population is projected to grow by another 192,000 in five years, at a cost of \$27.5 billion to build and operate additional prisons. At current rates, one-third of all black males, one-sixth of Latino males, and one in 17 white males will go to prison during their lives. Women represent the fastest growing segment of the prison population. The long-range consequences are enormous.

The result is increased social and racial inequality. "The massive incarceration of young males from mostly poor- and working-class neighborhoods, and the taking of women from their families and jobs, has crippled their potential for forming healthy families and achieving economic gains," it said. This Thanksgiving, as I sit down to a bountiful meal with friends and family, I'll be thinking of these inmates and their children on the outside.

I hope you will too.

Prevention Works, a blog of the National Crime Prevention Council

http://ncpc.typepad.com/prevention_works_blog/2007/11/prison-a-sign-o.html

Sentencing Law and Policy

http://sentencing.typepad.com/sentencing_law_and_policy/2007/11/new-report-urg.html

Corrections Community

http://community.nicic.org/blogs/corrections_headlines/archive/2007/11/19/quot-unlocking-america-quot-can-it-be-done.aspx

The Van Der Galien Gazette - Netherlands

<http://mvdg.wordpress.com/2007/11/15/major-report-calls-for-significant-reductions-in-us-prison-population/>

Thinking Outside the Cage - Colorado

<http://thinkoutsidethecage2.blogspot.com/2007/11/forum-on-prison-overcrowding.html>

Legal Times

<http://legaltimes.typepad.com/blt/2007/11/unlocking-ameri.html>

Juvienation

<http://juvienation.wordpress.com/2007/11/28/wednesday-morning-grab-bag>

Iowa Independent

<http://www.iowaindependent.com/showDiary.do?diaryId=1533>