



The Texas Smart-On-Crime Coalition pursues cost-effective reforms that enhance public safety, promote safe rehabilitation, and save taxpayer dollars.

2017 Legislative Priorities

Safely Manage Addiction through Rehabilitation and Treatment

Only drug treatment can address the underlying issue of addiction. In 2015, the 7,000 people sent to State Jail on low-level drug possession served an average of 4.2 months in county jail just waiting for trial, receiving no treatment. By sending people with low-level, nonviolent drug possession convictions to community-based treatment programs instead of prison, we can break the cycle of addiction, use taxpayer dollars more efficiently, and keep communities safe by preventing more serious crimes in the future.

Increase Education and Training to Reduce Re-Incarceration

When people complete education and vocational training while in jail or prison, or soon after release, their likelihood of returning to crime and prison drops significantly, and they have a better chance of contributing in their communities through meaningful employment. However, men and women reentering society from prison or jail have a hard time finding steady employment. Texas should expand educational and vocational programs for individuals with minor, nonviolent offenses to reduce recidivism and increase workforce participation.

Raise The Age: Keep Kids Out of Adult Prisons

Prosecuting and incarcerating youth in the adult criminal justice system leads to more crime, yet Texas is one of seven states that still automatically treats 17 year-olds as legal adults, regardless of the nature or severity of their crime. When 17-year-olds are arrested in Texas, no one is required to inform their parents of the arrest. Texas should raise the age of criminal responsibility to enhance safety, protect parental rights, and ensure that 17-year-olds are treated in the juvenile justice system when appropriate, but allow judges to transfer those younger than 18 into the adult system on a case-by-case basis.

Abolish the Failed Driver Responsibility Program

The Driver Responsibility Program (DRP) was a well-meaning idea created in 2003 to fund trauma centers, but it has many unintended consequences. The reality is the DRP is making Texas more dangerous by putting more unlicensed drivers on the road, creating severe economic hardship, and limiting employment opportunities.

Evidence-based Improvements to Probation and Parole

In 2015, more than one-third of the 36,171 people sent to Texas prisons and state jails were locked up as a result of a "technical violation" of probation, such as missing a meeting with a probation officer or failing a drug or alcohol test, even if they did not commit a new crime. Sending these people to prison is 10 times more expensive than supervising them in the community. Missing a meeting or failing an alcohol or drug test should not lead to years in prison. Probation should be reformed to improve outcomes and reduce costs.

SmartOnCrimeTexas.com | info@smartoncrimetexas.com

