

Targeted Criminal Justice Reform

REDUCING FINES AND FEES

Since 2000, the Oklahoma Legislature has added and increased fees for criminal defendants to finance the state's underfunded court system and other agencies. As a result, the financial costs imposed on Oklahomans involved with the court system have skyrocketed and the vast majority of fines and fees levied by our courts can never be paid. These economic effects are disproportionately felt by communities of color in Oklahoma, and they diminish the economic power of families across the state. Thousands of Oklahomans can't access legal remedies like expungement because of this same broken system of court debt. A person being locked up because they can't pay doesn't improve public safety, and these inequities only worsen Oklahoma's expensive incarceration crisis.



SENTENCING REFORM

Oklahoma imposes some of the longest prison sentences in the country. Those convicted in Oklahoma courts spend 70 percent longer in prison for property crimes and 79 percent longer for drug crimes than the national average. There is no evidence that this expensive and punitive sentencing system improves public safety. Each dollar spent lengthening prison sentences is a dollar that can not be invested in addiction treatment, mental health care for those in crisis, and workforce training for those with justice involvement. Funding models that prioritize treatment over jail have produced millions of dollars in prison cost savings and helped reduce crime in numerous states. Since 2000, 32 states have reduced sentences to offenses while lowering incarcerated populations as the crime rates declined. Oklahoma should embrace this model and create a system that is more efficient for the taxpayer, which is less harmful to families and which helps keep more vulnerable Oklahomans out of prison.

THE SOLUTION

- Modernizing Oklahoma's outdated sentencing laws to bring them in line with national best practices
- Rebuilding the financial structure for the state's criminal justice system to remove its reliance on fines and fees to fund its operations

Become An Advocate

Making change happen will require Oklahomans from all walks of life to advocate with lawmakers and speak out in their communities. OK Policy has resources available on our website or connect with Together Oklahoma (TOK), our statewide grassroots advocacy coalition.



For links to additional information visit us online at

www.okpolicy.org



PROTECT MEDICAID

- Keep path clear for Oklahoma voters to determine SQ 802 for straightforward Medicaid expansion
- Avoid legislation for other Medicaid expansion options that would reduce access to health care and tie up the state in lawsuits



TARGETED CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

- Rebuild financial structure for the state's criminal justice system to remove its reliance on fines and fees to fund its operations
- Modernize Oklahoma's sentencing based on national best practices



TAX CUT FOR WORKING OKLAHOMANS

- Restore refundability for the Earned Income Tax Credit, which most benefits Oklahoma's working poor while reducing the effects of poverty



PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE FOR WORKERS

- Adopt statewide insurance programs to make paid family and medical leave available to all workers and self-employed through a payroll tax of less than 1 percent



COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENTS FOR RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES

- Provide a 4 percent cost of living adjustment for state retirees who have not seen an increase in their pensions since 2008



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