



SENTENCING REFORM

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THE PROBLEM: Prison costs in Missouri are rising, and the state's crime and incarceration rates are higher than the national average. According to the Council of State Governments Justice Center, Missouri's violent crime rate was 34 percent above the U.S. rate in 2016 and the eighth-highest rate in the country. Missouri is also eighth in the nation in its incarceration rate, imprisoning 532 people per 100,000 residents in 2016. Missouri is on track to need two new prisons in the next five years, costing taxpayers nearly half a billion dollars.

THE SOLUTION: *Relax harsh and automatic sentencing guidelines that drive up costs without increasing public safety.*

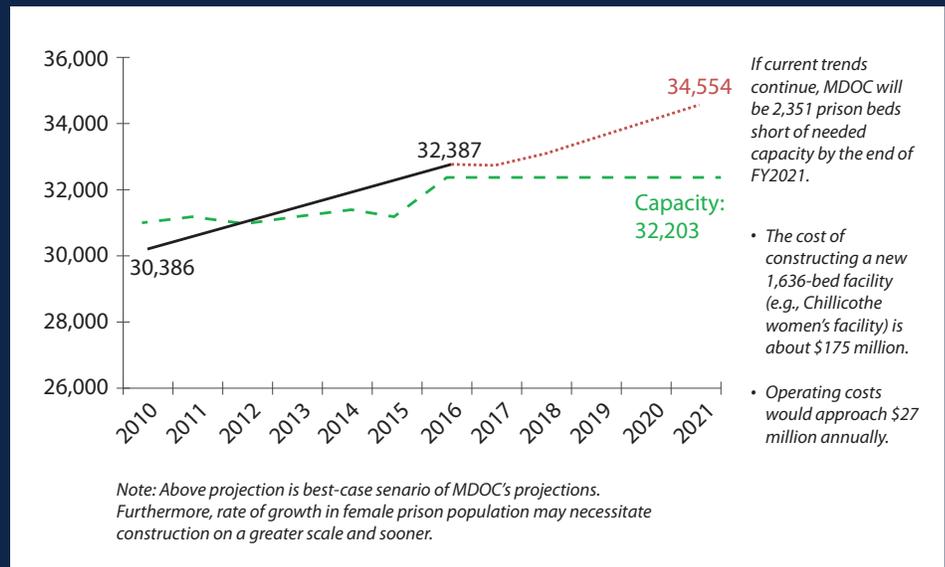
Granting courts the flexibility to sentence nonviolent offenders to treatment programs or probationary periods prior to locking them up—while still having the ability to treat violent or habitual offenders harshly—could reduce costs for taxpayers while keeping our communities safe.

WHO ELSE DOES IT? In 2010, South Carolina improved supervision for people on probation and parole and amended sentencing laws to prioritize space in prison for violent and repeat offenders. In 2015, Maryland, North Dakota, and Oklahoma gave more discretion to judges when considering sentences for certain drug offenses through “safety valve” laws.

THE OPPORTUNITY: Through smarter sentencing policies, Missouri might see results similar to South Carolina, where the total prison population fell by 16 percent and the space available to house violent offenders increased by 27 percent after reforms were enacted.

MISSOURI'S PRISON POPULATION AND PROJECTED GROWTH FY2010–2020

Missouri's current prison population growth will require spending hundreds of millions in construction and operating costs.



Sources: Council of State Governments Justice Center; Missouri Department of Corrections Offender Profile, FY 2016; Missouri Department of Corrections August 2017 Population Forecast.

KEY POINTS

- Without reforms, Missouri will need to build two new prisons in the near future at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars.
- Investing in research-based policies that curb recidivism and incarceration rates can make our communities safer and save tax dollars.

SHOW-ME INSTITUTE RESOURCES

Op-Ed: “Reform Missouri’s Mandatory Minimums”

Blog Post: “The Time is Right for Mandatory Minimum Reform”

Blog Post: “Missouri Needs Criminal Justice Reform – and Fast”

Blog Post: “Helping Ex-Offenders”