



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 National Institute of Corrections, "The crime rate in Missouri [2015] is about 18% higher than the national average rate." Missouri imprisoned 530 people per 100,000 population in 2015—the eighth-highest incarceration rate in the nation. High crime and incarceration rates present a significant cost to taxpayers, and imprisoning minors is especially expensive. Recent federal law requires that prisons adopt important—and expensive—protections for minors, among them providing educational resources and separating them from the adult population.

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

Courts should have the flexibility to sentence nonviolent offenders to treatment programs or probationary periods prior to locking them up—while still retaining the ability to treat violent or habitual offenders appropriately.

The Raise the Age movement advocates for 17-year-olds to be prosecuted in the juvenile court system unless certified as adults due to the nature or severity of their crimes. Raise the Age would mitigate much of the need to retrofit adult prisons to protect minors, and would offer minors educational and rehabilitative services.

WHO ELSE DOES IT? Currently, 45 states do not presume that 17-year olds should be tried as adults. Nine of these states have passed Raise the Age laws since 2007.

THE OPPORTUNITY: In addition to the cost savings from having to house fewer inmates or not having to retrofit adult institutions for minors, there is the potential for a substantial benefit in human capital if nonviolent and drug offenders are sentenced to treatment or probation instead of being warehoused in state institutions with few opportunities for self-improvement.

STATES THAT HAVE NOT PASSED RAISE THE AGE LAWS



■ States that still try 17 year olds as adults.

Source: Justice Policy Institute (2017) *Raise the Age: Shifting to a Safer and More Effective Juvenile Justice System*. 4. Washington, DC: Justice Policy Institute.

KEY POINTS

- Passing Raise the Age would not prevent judges from prosecuting 17-year-olds as adults if they were repeat offenders or if their crimes were especially serious.
- Other states have cut incarceration rates responsibly, reducing costs and increasing public safety.

SHOW-ME INSTITUTE RESOURCES

Blog Post: "Criminal Justice Reform: Addressing the Costs of Incarceration"

Blog Post: "Criminal Justice Reform: Raising the Age"

Blog Post: "Criminal Justice Reform: Mandatory Minimums"