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US CONGRESS

Criminal Justice Reform

When the United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population, but houses nearly one-quarter of the world's prisoners, the system isn't working. A country with our levels of prosperity has no business having the highest incarceration rate in the world; it disproportionately affects minorities, poor communities, and is a burden on everything from families to the economy.

There are simple, bipartisan approaches we can take to reform our criminal justice system to make our communities safer, make our laws more equitable, and save lives in the process:

- **Abolish private prisons.** There should never be a profit motive for locking more people behind bars for more time. There are some functions that private industry can serve better than government; this is not one of them.
- **Repair the damage done by racial bias.** Despite equal rates of cannabis consumption across racial lines, black Americans are nearly [four times more likely](#) to be arrested for it. It's time for this kind of unconscionable disparity to end, and we can begin with outlawing [racially biased "stop and frisk"](#) laws.
- **Address gun violence with common sense reforms.** Gun owners often claim Democrats want to "take away your guns." That's not my approach, and it never will be. What I want — for all communities that have suffered from the scourge of gun violence — is smart legislation that makes it more difficult for criminals, terrorists, and the mentally unstable to get their hands on weapons designed to kill.
- **End the failed War on Drugs.** The disastrous War on Drugs has been costly, deadly, racist, and a complete failure. We must put an end to draconian minimum sentencing laws for non-violent drug offenses and recognize — like [other countries](#) have successfully done — when drugs are a [public health issue](#), not a criminal issue.
- **Fully legalize cannabis.** Not only has cannabis never led to an overdose in human history, but states with full legalization are seeing a large [decline in opioid deaths](#). Furthermore, the [tax revenue](#) from legalization is helping these states improve everything from schools to communities. [Ninety-five percent of Americans](#) live in a state with access to some form of legalized cannabis; it's long overdue that Congress acknowledges this by ending cannabis prohibition at the federal level.
- **Restore voting rights.** Laws vary by jurisdiction, but nearly all U.S. states have some form of law barring felons from voting (even though they count in census data used to determine congressional districts). Nationwide, those who have paid their debt to society must have their right to vote restored.
- **Make the Fair Sentencing Act a reality.** The 2010 law [reduced the sentencing disparity between offenses for crack and powder cocaine from 100:1 to 18:1](#). This was a step in the right direction, but it should be 1:1, just as DUI sentences don't account for what type of liquor was drunk.



For more information about where Susan stands on the issues, visit [WildForCongress.com/Principles](https://www.wildforcongress.com/principles).