



## AMERICANS *for* TAX REFORM

Members of Nebraska Legislature  
Nebraska State Capitol  
Lincoln, Nebraska

March 23, 2017

Dear members of the Nebraska legislature,

**On Behalf of Americans for Tax Reform and our supporters across Nebraska, I write today in strong support of LB 447. If passed, LB 447 would focus Nebraska's overcrowded prisons on dangerous offenders and save the state several millions of dollars.**

Nonviolent drug offenses, which make up a significant proportion of mandatory minimums, result in arbitrary and severe sentencing outcomes that neither fit the crime nor the individual's unique circumstances. Nebraska prisons are now filled with low-level offenders, resulting in overcapacity prison populations and higher costs for taxpayers. This is why over 30 states have reassessed mandatory minimum sentences in the last 15 years.

**LB 447 is an important step toward comprehensive sentencing reform.** Judges are denied the right to bring their experience, discretion, and sense of what is just into the sentencing procedure. This approach fills people who pose little risk to society, straining public resources without any gains in safety.

This legislation would turn sentencing over to the judges who know the specifics of a crime and can properly determine what an appropriate sentence is. This avoids excessive incarceration and maintains families intact for longer. Children and spouses will not have to be deprived of breadwinners, reducing the negative effects on their own lives.

**In addition, LB 447 has the potential to save the state of Nebraska \$3.5 million annually.** The current results of a high rate of mandatory minimum offenders in prison are not cost-effective. As of 2013, Nebraska's correctional expenditures were nearly 193 million. Unless state policymakers act, they will likely need to spend another \$100 million to build yet another prison.

Given the undeniable costs and dubious benefits of mass, long-term incarceration of nonviolent drug offenders, the Nebraska legislature should take steps to give judges more flexibility in sentencing those offenders. The Cornhusker State has already passed legislation to improve public safety through smarter crime policies, this bill represents another step in the right direction.

**I encourage you to extend your support for this important legislation. For more information, please contact Jorge Marin in my office at [jmarin@atr.org](mailto:jmarin@atr.org)**

Regards,

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