



AMERICANS *for* TAX REFORM

Grover G. Norquist
President

November 19, 2018

Dear Senators:

I write urging you to support the FIRST STEP Act, an important part of reforming America's justice system.

Currently, there are 2.3 million individuals behind bars. Due to the increasing prison population from 1980 until today, spending has more than quadrupled from \$17 billion to \$74 billion. The rapid growth of prison spending puts legislators and law enforcement officials in a difficult position. The FIRST STEP Act applies proven solutions to move away from a justice system that encourages recidivism to a system that encourages rehabilitation.

Rather than simply warehousing offenders, this bill requires the Bureau of Prisons to create risk assessment tools to evaluate each inmate. Low risk offenders are then given the option of undergoing evidence-based programming to help break the cycle of criminality. Inmates earn time credits, which allows them to spend some time of their sentence in prerelease custody, an alternative for low risk offenders that not only helps them reintegrate into society under supervision, but also reduces costs to taxpayers.

The sentencing reforms that the Senate has discussed including in the FIRST STEP Act would mean that violent offenders are still punished and that low-risk, non-violent offenders receive sentences better suited for the crime. Public safety should be the first thought when the government determines who needs to stay and for how long. Some offenders need to stay behind bars for a long time, but that is not everyone – the punishment has gotten away from fitting the crime.

I encourage you to express your full support for these reforms with a favorable vote on the Senate floor. We can't afford for the clock to run out on this important piece of legislation. Should you have any questions or comments please contact Katie McAuliffe at kmcauliffe@atr.org.

Onward,

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