



October 4, 2017

## **Support the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, S. 1917**

On behalf of our activist community, I urge you to contact your senators and ask them to support the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, S. 1917, introduced by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa). The bill would address over-incarceration concerns in the United States federal prison system, where nearly half of prisoners are serving sentences for nonviolent drug offenses, and many of those for first-time offenses.

With three facets — front-end sentencing reform, back-end corrections reform, and commission creation to study the criminal justice system — the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act (SRCA) is a comprehensive solution to the myriad of problems marring the federal criminal justice system.

The SRCA would expand the federal safety valve exception for mandatory minimum sentences for low-level, nonviolent drug offenses, taking big government out of the courtroom and allowing latitude for sentencing in accordance with the facts of a case, instead of in accordance with outdated and overbroad federal law. This ensures that prison space and taxpayer dollars are used on offenders who pose a threat to society, not on those given decades-long sentences for low-level, nonviolent drug offenses.

Similar to the Smarter Sentencing Act, which was introduced in the 114th Congress, the SRCA would retroactively apply the Fair Sentencing Act, which reduced the obscene sentencing disparity between crack cocaine and powdered cocaine from 100-to-1 to 18-to-1, to certain currently incarcerated nonviolent offenders.

The bill includes language requiring the Department of Justice to compile and make publicly available a list of all federal criminal statutes and regulations carrying criminal penalties, as well as any applicable criminal intent, or *mens rea*, standard.

The bill includes vital corrections reforms by refocusing the use of limited federal resources to reduce recidivism rates. Lowering the likelihood of offenders who have completed their

sentences to commit subsequent offenses is crucial to public safety, and to the effectiveness of our federal criminal justice system. The SRCA would create individualized programs for prisoners, proven effective in states like Georgia and Texas, in reducing recidivism and promoting successful reentry into society.

Finally, some of the taxpayer dollars saved by these common-sense reforms would be used to establish a temporary National Criminal Justice Commission to ensure that the most effective reforms continue to be implemented and resources used wisely, not carelessly wasted.

Not only does the SRCA represent a new direction for federal criminal justice policy, requiring more accountability from offenders and incentives to reduce their risk of recidivism, it would also save money. The version of SRCA marked up by the Senate Judiciary Committee during the 114th Congress would have saved \$722 million over ten years, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

For these reasons, I urge you to contact your senators and ask them to support the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, S. 1917.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Brandon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Brandon  
President, FreedomWorks