



STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

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Jeb Bush

Former Governor of Florida

Newt Gingrich

American Solutions for Winning the Future

Grover Norquist

Americans for Tax Reform

Edwin Meese III

Former U.S. Attorney General

William J. Bennett

Former Secretary of Education and Federal "Drug Czar"

Asa Hutchinson

Former U.S. Attorney and Administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

J.C. Watts

Former Member of the U.S. House of Representatives for Oklahoma's 4th Congressional District

Pat Nolan

Director of the Criminal Justice Reform Project at the American Conservative Union Foundation

David Keene

Former Chairman of the American Conservative Union

Richard Viguerie

ConservativeHQ.com

Chuck Colson (1931-2012)

Prison Fellowship Ministries

Erick Erickson

Founder of Red State

Ken Blackwell

Former Ohio Secretary of State

Brooke Rollins

Texas Public Policy Foundation

Ralph Reed

Founder of the Faith and Freedom Coalition

Eli Lehrer

R Street Institute (Washington, DC)

Rebecca Hagelin

Executive Committee of the Council for National Policy

Larry Thompson

Former U.S. Deputy Attorney General

Tony Perkins

Family Research Council

Penny Nance

Concerned Women for America

John J. DiLulio, Jr.

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Ward Connerly

American Civil Rights Institute and former Regent of University of California

George Kelling

Manhattan Institute (NY)

Gary Bauer

American Values

Michael Reagan

The Reagan Legacy Foundation

Monica Crowley, Ph.D.

Fox News political analyst

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List of signatories continues on back

As members of the nation's conservative movement, we strongly support constitutionally limited government, transparency, individual liberty, personal responsibility, and free enterprise. We believe public safety is a core responsibility of government because the establishment of a well-functioning criminal justice system enforces order and respect for every person's right to property and life, and ensures that liberty does not lead to license.

Conservatives correctly insist that government services be evaluated on whether they produce the best possible results at the lowest possible cost, but too often this lens of accountability has not focused as much on public safety policies as other areas of government. As such, corrections spending has expanded to become the second fastest growing area of state budgets—trailing only Medicaid.

Conservatives are known for being tough on crime, but we must also be tough on criminal justice spending. That means demanding more cost-effective approaches that enhance public safety. A clear example is our reliance on prisons, which serve a critical role by incapacitating dangerous offenders and career criminals but are not the solution for every type of offender. And in some instances, they have the unintended consequence of hardening nonviolent, low-risk offenders—making them a greater risk to the public than when they entered.

Applying the following conservative principles to criminal justice policy is vital to achieving a cost-effective system that protects citizens, restores victims, and reforms wrongdoers.

1. As with any government program, the criminal justice system must be transparent and include performance measures that hold it accountable for its results in protecting the public, lowering crime rates, reducing re-offending, collecting victim restitution and conserving taxpayers' money.
2. Crime victims, along with the public and taxpayers, are among the key "consumers" of the criminal justice system; the victim's conception of justice, public safety, and the offender's risk for future criminal conduct should be prioritized when determining an appropriate punishment.
3. The corrections system should emphasize public safety, personal responsibility, work, restitution, community service, and treatment—both in probation and parole, which supervise most offenders, and in prisons.

4. An ideal criminal justice system works to reform amenable offenders who will return to society through harnessing the power of families, charities, faith-based groups, and communities.
5. Because incentives affect human behavior, policies for both offenders and the corrections system must align incentives with our goals of public safety, victim restitution and satisfaction, and cost-effectiveness, thereby moving from a system that grows when it fails to one that rewards results.
6. Criminal law should be reserved for conduct that is either blameworthy or threatens public safety, not wielded to grow government and undermine economic freedom.

These principles are grounded in time-tested conservative truths—constitutionally limited government, transparency, individual liberty, personal responsibility, free enterprise, and the centrality of the family and community. All of these are critical to addressing today's criminal justice challenges. It is time to apply these principles to the task of delivering a better return on taxpayers' investments in public safety. Our security, prosperity, and freedom depend on it.

About Us

Right on Crime is a national initiative led by the Texas Public Policy Foundation, one of the nation's leading state-based conservative think tanks. The initiative aims to raise awareness of the truly conservative position on criminal justice policy by demonstrating the growing support for effective criminal justice reforms within the conservative movement. This initiative will share research and policy ideas, mobilize conservative leaders, and work to raise public awareness.

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American Alliance of Jews and Christians

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Platte Institute (NE)

Michael Carnuccio
Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs

Jerry Madden
Former Texas House Corrections Chairman

Ronald F. Scheberle
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