

## RECENT LEGISLATIVE TRENDS IN SENTENCING AND CORRECTIONS

---

Summary of research, with a focus on legislation passed in 2010-2012 as the result of efforts by a state-level, inter-branch working group

Mai Linh Spencer  
Consultant, National Council on Crime and  
Delinquency

### States with the most comprehensive recent sentencing and corrections reform legislation (2010-2012):

- Arkansas
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- South Carolina
- Vermont

## Common Trajectory

Working group is formed, often appointed by Legislature or Governor

Motivated by fiscal pressures and desire for data-driven policy

Technical assistance provided by Pew, CSGJC, etc.

Working group issues recommendations

Some/all of recommendations are translated into bill

Bill passes with – often overwhelming – bipartisan support

## Areas of Reform

- Reduce time served in prison and on community supervision
  - Decrease admissions
  - Shorten stays/supervision periods
- Expand community corrections options
- Reduce probation/parole revocations
- Mandate risk and needs assessment
- Ensure reinvestment
- Require evaluation of policy changes

## “Sentencing Commissions”

- Make-up:
  - Bipartisan
  - Inter-branch
  - Sometimes non-government stakeholders
  - 7 to 26 members
- Role:
  - Make recommendations
  - Draft legislation
- Keys to success?

## Sources: existing research and reports

- Nicole D. Porter, *The State of Sentencing 2012: Developments in Policy and Practice* (The Sentencing Project, 2013)
- Summit Report from The National Summit on Justice Reinvestment and Public Safety: *Addressing Recidivism, Crime, and Corrections Spending* (2011)
- Lauren-Brooke Eisen and Juliene James, *Reallocating Justice Resources: A Review of 2011 State Sentencing Trends*. (Vera Institute, 2012)
- Adrienne Austin, *Criminal Justice Trends: Key Legislative Changes in Sentencing Policy, 2001–2010*. (Vera Institute, 2010)
- Ram Subramanian and Rebecca Tublitz. *Realigning Justice Resources: A Review of Population and Spending Shifts in Prison and Community Corrections*. (Vera Institute, 2012)
- NGA Center for Best Practices, *Issue Brief: State Efforts in Sentencing and Corrections Reform* (October 2011)

Further Inquiry/Research?