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NEW REPORT HIGHLIGHTS STATES WITH FEWER RETURNS TO PRISON

*Governors and Congress Point to Successes in Boosting Public Safety,
Reducing Recidivism and Cutting Corrections Spending*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Two governors today pointed to successes in their states and data from a new report to demonstrate that bipartisan, research-driven approaches to corrections and public safety issues are generating results across the country.

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, D-WV, and Gov. Tom Corbett, R-PA, joined senior Republican and Democratic members of Congress for an extraordinary gathering in the U.S. Senate to discuss strategies on corrections reform and recidivism reduction.

The report—[*Reducing Recidivism: States Deliver Results*](#)—was released today by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center and the National Reentry Resource Center (NRRRC) and highlights significant reductions in recidivism rates in eight states, including Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Wisconsin. The declines in recidivism—the percentage of those returned to prison within three years of their release—ranged from about 6 percent to 18 percent.

“As a former prosecutor, I believe we must ensure that when people get out of prison, they return to our communities as productive members of society, so we can start to reverse the dangerous and costly cycle of recidivism,” said U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-VT, who also chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee. “This report clearly shows that investing in community-based re-entry programs can improve public safety and save taxpayer dollars. Last year I introduced the bipartisan Second Chance Reauthorization Act. I urge all members of Congress to support this legislation and a smarter approach for our criminal justice system.”

These latest findings build on a report issued in 2012 highlighting seven additional states that had achieved major reductions in their statewide recidivism rates.

“Six years ago, with overwhelming bipartisan support, Congress enacted the Second Chance Act, helping states capitalize on local innovation and the latest data to give people who are released from prison the tools they need to stay out and turn their lives around,” said Ohio Republican U.S. Sen. Rob Portman, who cosponsored the act with Sen. Leahy. “The results of this report released today demonstrate that the Second Chance Act works, and we need to do even more to support these kinds of grassroots, community-led initiatives.”

The report also showed that while these states achieved lower reincarceration rates for people released from prison, they also saw their overall crime rates decline and locked up fewer people.

“We have developed a common sense and consensus approach to prison overcrowding and public safety in West Virginia,” said Gov. Tomblin, who also serves as the president of the Council of State Governments. “Through this research-driven approach, we have developed a financially sustainable plan to reduce prison overcrowding and rehabilitate individuals released into the community—maximizing correction dollars and improving public safety.”

Added Gov. Corbett: “Getting more public safety at less cost is a goal that every governor, Republican or Democrat, can get behind. Since the 1990s, our Department of Corrections was building almost one new prison per year just to keep up with the growing inmate population, a population swelled in part by mandatory sentencing laws. We knew we needed to begin to think differently and reform the system. So, working with Republicans and Democrats, we crafted a bipartisan solution to our corrections problem that is helping build a stronger future for Pennsylvania.”

Corbett and Tomblin are among a collection of governors who have worked with Republican and Democratic lawmakers and county officials to lead Justice Reinvestment Initiatives (JRI) in their respective states. Drawing on intensive assistance made available through the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and The Pew Charitable Trusts, policymakers have analyzed data that points to ways to reduce corrections spending and direct those savings to strategies that provide greater public safety.

These successes led Justice Department officials today to announce the significant increase in the number of states to be served through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, with new projects being launched this month in Alabama, Nebraska and Washington.

“Federal commitments totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars to individual states have helped those jurisdictions save hundreds of millions of dollars,” said BJA Director Denise O’Donnell. “That’s a return on investment that we’re proud of, and it explains why this Administration and Congress have increased the federal commitment to the Justice Reinvestment Initiative.”

“States like Georgia and North Carolina are demonstrating the value of a justice reinvestment approach, in which elected officials work across party lines and use data to design strategies that not only cut both recidivism and incarceration rates, but save taxpayers millions of dollars in the process,” said Adam Gelb, director of Pew’s Public Safety Performance Project.

“Not long ago, Republicans and Democrats found themselves in a constantly escalating war of words about who was tougher on crime,” said Michael Thompson, director of the CSG Justice Center. “The Republicans and Democrats coming together today, the data we’re seeing, and the commitment the federal government is announcing underscores that when it comes to crime policy, we’ve entered a post-partisan era, eschewing simplistic rhetoric and instead using the latest science to increase public safety and cut spending.”

About The CSG Justice Center

The Council of State Governments Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state and federal levels from all branches of government. The Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan advice and evidence-based, consensus-driven strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities. For more information visit www.csjjusticecenter.org.

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