

Congressman Smith Calls for Criminal Justice Reform

The American criminal justice system is fundamentally broken. Past reforms meant to keep our communities safer have resulted in disproportionately high incarceration rates among people of color, splitting families apart and perpetuating cycles of poverty. It is past time that we make serious reforms to our criminal justice system to ensure that all of our children grow up in a more just society.

- **Ending Private Prisons and Restoring Fairness to the System: Original Cosponsor of H.R. 3543, the Justice is Not For Sale Act** - As a country, we must end the practice of turning the incarceration of citizens into a business transaction. Adam is an original cosponsor of the Justice is Not For Sale Act. This legislation, also introduced by Senator Bernie Sanders in the U.S. Senate, would end all private prison contracts at the federal, state, and local level – including immigration detention facilities. H.R. 3543 would also reinstate the federal parole system to allow the US Sentencing Commission to make individualized, risk-based determinations regarding each prisoner.
- **Overhauling Our Judicial System: Cosponsored H.R. 2944, the SAFE Justice Act** - this comprehensive bill utilizes evidence-based, state-tested reforms. This critical legislation simplifies unnecessary federal regulatory crimes that lead to over prosecution for minor offenses, allows for the creation of drug treatment, mental health, and veteran treatment courts at the federal level, and reinstates a reformed federal parole system. The SAFE Justice Act would also allow for federal judges to bypass mandatory minimums and consider multiple sources of mitigating information in sentencing.
- **Supporting Rehabilitation: Cosponsored H.R. 953, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act** - Establishes a best practice task force under HHS which would work to improve narcotic prescription disbursement, fund grants for veterans treatment courts and in-prison education, and increase funding for youth awareness campaigns on the dangers of narcotic use. The bill would also create grant funding to train law enforcement agencies on the use of Naloxone (Narcan), the reversal agent for opioid overdose.
- **Ending Racial Profiling: Cosponsored H.R. 1933, the End Racial Profiling Act** – legislation prohibiting any law enforcement agent or agency from engaging in racial profiling, and also allows for any individual injured by racial profiling the right to file a lawsuit. H.R. 1933 requires federal law enforcement to develop and maintain policies to eliminate profiling, and require state/local/tribal law enforcement agencies who apply for certain federal grants to develop similar policies.
- **Promoting Accountability: Cosponsored HR 1680, the CAMERA Act (Creating Accountability by Making Effective Recording Available)** - this legislation would designate federal dollars to be used to defray the cost of purchasing body worn cameras and related video storage costs and require agencies applying for grants to create parameters for the safe and effective use of the cameras, including storage of video and its subsequent destruction after it is no longer needed.
- **Ensuring Transparency: Cosponsored H.R. 2302, the Police Training and Independent Review Act** – To receive federal law enforcement grants under this bill, states must pass laws requiring the appointment of a special prosecutor to review cases where an officer is a defendant, including officer-involved shootings. It also requires training on racial and ethnic bias at law enforcement academies.
- **Stemming the Flow of Military Equipment to Local Police: 1033 Program** - Adam joined Representative Hank Johnson in leading a letter to President Obama, calling for much-needed changes to the transfer program of military weapons and equipment to local law enforcement agencies. *As Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Adam has requested a hearing on the topic of the “1033” transfer program.*
- **Providing Legal Help to Those In Need: Adam supports funding for Legal Services Corporation (LSC)**, the single largest funder of civil legal aid for low-income Americans and signed on to a letter to appropriators asking to increase their funding for the LSC and voted against amendments that would have shifted funding away.
- **Helping With Reentry: Cosponsored H.R. 3406, the Second Chance Act** - Cosponsored legislation that would reauthorize the Second Chance Act, which continues funding for reentry programs at the state and local levels that have been proven to reduce recidivism, lead to better outcomes for those released from prison, and lower the amount our nation spends on incarceration. We lock up more of our own people than any other country in the world.
- **Equal Employment Opportunities through Banning the Box: Cosponsored H.R. 3470, the Fair Chance Act** -This “ban the box” legislation prohibits federal agencies and primary federal contractors from asking about an applicant’s criminal history on an initial employment application. This legislation allows applicants who have completed their prison sentences to build a strong foundation for a career.
- **Funding Education & Rehabilitation: Cosponsored Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act** - This legislation reauthorizes the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment & Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA) through FY2020. MIOTCRA creates grants that help fund veterans treatment courts, education and rehabilitation programs for incarcerated individuals, and specialized training at police academies for law enforcement personnel on working with individuals with mental illness.
- **Reinstating Access to Opportunities to Education: Cosponsored H.R. 2521, the REAL Act** - Restores Pell Grant eligibility for people in state and federal prisons to ensure that people who will eventually return home from prison will do so equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to reintegrate into society. Postsecondary education can be extremely helpful at deterring reentry into the criminal justice system, and this legislation will help lower rates of recidivism.