

Congressman Adam 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.”

-Congressman Adam Smith

- Overhauling Our Judicial System: Cosponsored H.R. 2944, the SAFE Justice Act -

Congressman Smith supports the SAFE Justice Act, which is a comprehensive bill that 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 about a case when issuing a sentence.

- Ending Racial Profiling: Cosponsored H.R. 1933, the End Racial Profiling Act -

The End Racial Profiling Act prohibits 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. This legislation would also require 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 H.R. 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 (BWC) and related video storage costs. This legislation would additionally require those 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.

- Congressman Smith also supported Congressman Joaquin Castro’s amendment of the Fiscal Year 2016 Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) Appropriations bill to increase grant funding for BWC programs by \$10 million.

- Stemming the Flow of Military Equipment to Local Police: 1033 Program -

Congressman Smith 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, Congressman Smith has requested a hearing on the topic of the “1033” transfer program.

- Providing Legal Help to Those in Need: Supported funding for Legal Services Corporation (LSC) -

LSC is the single largest funder of civil legal aid for low-income Americans. Congressman Smith signed on to a letter to CJS appropriators asking to increase their funding for the LSC, and voted against amendments that would have shifted funding away from the program.

- Ending Private Prisons: 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. Congressman Smith is an original cosponsor of the Justice is Not For Sale Act. This legislation, which was 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, which will allow the US Sentencing Commission to make individualized, risk-based determinations regarding each prisoner and restore fairness in the system.

- Reforming Solitary Confinement Use: Cosponsored H.R. 3399, the Solitary Confinement Study and Reform Act -

This bill establishes a national commission to study the use of solitary confinement, and will set of best practices for federal prisons to follow.

- 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. Legislation like the Fair Chance Act allows for applicants who have completed their prison sentences to build a strong foundation with a potential employer increasing their chance of building a career.