



July 17, 2015

To the Honorable Members of the U.S. House of Representatives:

Currently, nearly one in every 100 American adults is behind bars and once released from prison more than four in ten returns within three years. This failing system costs federal, state and local governments approximately \$85 billion, yet does not deliver adequate public safety results for taxpayers and victims.

In addition to the enormous budgetary costs, our current criminal justice system places tremendous human costs on society.

In response, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has launched The Justice Performance Project, aimed to advance proven criminal justice reforms based on over two decades of data-driven research and practice.

Over the past seven years, ALEC has worked to craft commonsense solutions to the problems plaguing our criminal justice systems. These [model policies](#) have been advanced in states across the nation, realigning corrections spending to focus on practices proven to reduce recidivism.

Last month, Congressmen Jim Sensenbrenner and Bobby Scott introduced the [Safe Accountable Fair and Effective \(SAFE\) Justice Act](#) which incorporates ALEC's model sentencing and corrections policies and brings state-tested, research-based solutions to the federal system.

The need for federal reform is clear: Between 1980 and 2013, our federal prison population has ballooned by 800 percent. Today, taxpayers spend nearly as much on federal prisons as they spent on the entire Justice Department in 1980: about \$6.7 billion, after adjusting for inflation. These rising costs come at the expense of other vital public safety efforts, including funding for other correctional practices that are proven to reduce recidivism.

Over the last eight years, a number States have implemented evidence-based criminal justice reforms that proven to give taxpayers a better return on every dollar spent and reduce recidivism. States such as Texas, Georgia, Mississippi, and Utah have successfully put in place such strategies.

ALEC commends Congressmen Sensenbrenner and Scott for charting a course for federal reform based on the innovations advanced in states. SAFE Justice will decrease the rate of return to prison – save dollars, reduce crime and rebuild lives.

Across the ideological spectrum, leaders and organizations agree that now is the time for action.

For more information on ALEC's criminal justice work, please visit our [webpage](#) or contact me directly at 571-482-5155 or mhough@alec.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Hough". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Hough
Director, Justice Performance Project
American Legislative Exchange Council
mhough@alec.org | (571) 482-5155