



The Truth Behind Extreme Sentencing Laws

Illinois's "Truth-in-Sentencing" (TIS) law is one of the biggest drivers of over-incarceration. This law severely limits the amount of time people convicted of certain offenses can earn off their sentences.

Why This Is a Problem:

Previously, people sentenced to prison in Illinois could earn sentence reduction credits for good behavior and participation in certain programs. Most people were eligible to have as much as 50% of their sentences cut, allowing them to return to their families and seek employment quicker. But, in 1998, extreme sentencing laws passed in Illinois. As a result, **people are incarcerated far longer for the same convictions.**

Research shows **increased incarceration does not make communities safer.** Instead, long sentences isolate individuals from their families and leave them unprepared to reenter the community. Long-term incarceration is costly to taxpayers and also harms families and communities, with a disproportionate effect on communities of color and communities with low-income already reeling from decades of disinvestment.

The Solution:

The **Restorative Sentencing Act** would allow people with extreme sentences to receive sentencing credits if they complete rehabilitative programs. The amount of credit that can be earned is capped at five years. Individuals serving a term of natural life imprisonment may not earn sentencing credit under the Restorative Sentencing Act.

- **Incentivizing individuals to participate in restorative programming is one of the safest ways to reduce the prison population and prepare people to return to society**
- Individuals will receive credit for completing educational programs, behavioral modification programs, life skill courses, substance abuse programs, correctional industry assignments, and re-entry planning, which will prepare them to successfully return to the community and reduce recidivism.

The Restorative Sentencing Act is a recommended bipartisan reform from the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform created by Gov. Rauner. It is recommendation #19 in the Commission's 2016 Final Report.