



The Texas Smart-On-Crime Coalition pursues cost-effective reforms that enhance public safety, promote safe rehabilitation, and save taxpayer dollars.

## Agenda for the 85th State Legislative Session



### Raise the Age: Keep Kids Out of Adult Jails and Prisons

Currently, 17-year-olds in Texas are automatically placed in the adult justice system. Locking up 17-year-olds with older prisoners increases the likelihood they will re-offend. It is critical that Texas raise the age of criminal responsibility so that 17-year-olds can be treated in the juvenile justice system when appropriate, but allow judges to transfer those younger than 18 into the adult system on a case-by-case basis.

### Abolish Texas' Driver Responsibility Program

While the Driver Responsibility Program (DRP) was a well-meaning idea created in 2003 to fund trauma centers, it has many unintended consequences. The reality is the DRP is making Texas more dangerous by creating severe economic hardship, putting more unlicensed drivers on the road, and limiting employment opportunities.

### Smart Sentencing

#### » Reduce penalties for certain minor nonviolent crimes

Many minor nonviolent crimes are punished as felonies instead of misdemeanors. Most individuals who commit these minor offenses do not receive treatment for addiction or mental illness while in prison, and they are released to a lifetime of barriers to employment and housing. Lowering penalties for minor nonviolent offenses will allow more people to be put on probation and will create opportunities for them to avoid future interactions with the criminal justice system.

#### » Use probation instead of incarceration for certain minor nonviolent crimes

Probation is significantly less expensive than incarceration in county jail or prison, costing the state only \$1.63 per person per day. It should be the first punishment choice in many minor nonviolent cases.

#### » Reduce probation revocations

When people on probation commit a *technical* violation, such as missing a meeting, their probation term may be revoked and they may be sent to prison, even if they did not commit a new crime. Technical violations are responsible for over 12,000 people being sent to prison each year, costing the state nearly \$250 million annually.

### Increase Education and Training to Reduce Re-Incarceration

The harder it is for someone to find a job after release from prison, the greater the chance he or she will end up going back to prison. Texas should prioritize educational and vocational programs for individuals that are proven to reduce re-offending and increase workforce participation. It is also critical to ensure that criminal records made available to potential employers are accurate.



## Questions or Concerns?

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