

## Support Bipartisan Sentencing Reform

The suffering of millions at the hands of our unjust criminal legal system is one of the most pressing civil rights crises of our time. The United States has become the leading incarcerator in the world and our criminal justice system disproportionately targets and impacts people of color – Black people are five times as likely as whites to be incarcerated. Meaningful reform legislation must include robust sentencing reform that reduces harsh mandatory minimums and grants judges greater discretion. Mandatory minimums are the single largest factor in the growth of our prison population.

JCPA is advocating for three sentencing-related bills already approved in bipartisan votes by the Senate Judiciary Committee, where they were introduced jointly by the Chair and Ranking Republican, Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA). The bills now await consideration by the full Senate and need at least 10 Republican Senators to vote for them, and each is short by a handful of those votes. Accordingly, JCPA and its partners are seeking further Republican Senate support and pushing Senate leadership to maintain the plan to move these bills no later than October.

**We urge Members of Congress to cosponsor and support the passage of the First Step Implementation Act (S. 1014/ H.R. 3510), Covid Safer Detention Act (S. 312/ H.R. 3669), and the Prohibiting Punishment of Acquitted Conduct Act (S. 601/H.R. 1621) no later than October.**

- **The First Step Implementation Act would retroactively apply major sentencing reforms from the First Step Act of 2018 and provide judges in future cases increased discretion to give sentences below mandatory minimums.** The bill would also implement major reforms for people sentenced as youth, including the opportunity to have lengthy sentences reconsidered.
- **The Covid Safer Detention Act would make clarifications and technical improvements to the federal Elderly Home Detention Pilot program and compassionate release process.** The bill would provide eligibility in these programs to additional vulnerable, low-risk incarcerated people and expedite releases from federal prison through these programs during the COVID 19 pandemic. It is intended to be to expand the number of people who can benefit from earlier release from federal prisons during the pandemic.
- **The Prohibiting Punishment of Acquitted Conduct Act would end the practice of judges increasing sentences based on conduct for which a person has been acquitted.** This practice is unfortunately common, even though it appears to “convict” a person for a crime for which that person was already acquitted. The bill would also allow a prior acquittal to be used as mitigation in sentencing for some other conviction.

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