

# Texas Smart on Crime Coalition Press Release

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*Contact: Bill Hammond. (512) 637-7701*

## Getting Smart on Crime

### *New coalition launches legislative effort to bring about major juvenile and criminal justice reform in Texas*

**AUSTIN, TX**— A broad-based and diverse coalition of groups is coming together to support criminal justice reforms that will make the system more just and, at the same time, improve public safety for all Texans.

The Texas Smart-On-Crime Coalition will advocate for reforms that will provide punishment that actually fits the crime, protection for the innocent and a path to redemption for those convicted of non-violent crimes so they can get back to work and be productive members of society.

“We have tried locking people up and throwing away the key, and that isn’t always the best answer,” said Texas Association of Business CEO Bill Hammond. “For people convicted of non-violent crime, one answer is making a path for them to return to productive society, whether that means rehabilitation programs, education or job training.”

Marc Levin, Director of the Center for Effective Justice at the Texas Public Policy Foundation adds: “As in many other policy areas, Texas has been a model for the nation on criminal justice reform – not just in what we have accomplished, but how we have reached a broad consensus on sensible reforms. Our policies and non-partisan approach have inspired dozens of other states to follow our lead, and are even starting to spur some positive movement from Washington, D.C. Texas can still do more to reduce crime and its cost to taxpayers, and we look forward to working with the other members of the Smart-On-Crime Coalition to bring about these improvements.”

Dr. Ana Yáñez-Correa, Executive Director of the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC), agrees: “Having advocated for justice reform since 2003, TCJC is thrilled to be a partner in this historic coalition in Texas,” she said. “Together, we will fight for a stronger and safer Texas, where each community member has the tools to live responsibly.”

“There are too many Texans in prison,” said ACLU of Texas Executive Director Terri Burke. “Incarcerating non-violent offenders and people with mental illness destroys lives and wastes taxpayer money without making us safer. As this coalition shows, everyone has an interest in making our criminal justice system smarter.”

Traci Berry, Senior Vice President with Goodwill of Central Texas added: “Goodwill Central Texas is proud to be a member of the new Smart-on-Crime Coalition. We are committed to working with these other strong partners to remove barriers for people with criminal backgrounds and to meet the employment and training needs of Texas businesses. Linking them together strengthens individuals, families, and Texas communities.”

The Coalition will focus on reforming both the adult and juvenile criminal justice systems, focusing on a wide range of areas. Some of the Coalition’s goals include decriminalizing failure to attend school in the juvenile justice system and reforming the state jail system by allowing certain individuals charged with felonies to serve probation terms rather than going into a state jail. The Coalition also supports measures that would improve probation outcomes and require pre-release job training and education initiatives for those about to get out of prison.

“This is an ambitious agenda,” said Hammond. “We believe that these are common sense reforms that a majority of Texans and a majority of legislators will support.”

For more information please visit <http://smartoncrimetexas.com/>

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