



SOUTH CAROLINA SENTENCING REFORM OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Status Report (June 2015)

South Carolina's prison population nearly tripled between 1983 and 2009, rising from approximately 9,000 inmates to more than 25,000. During this span, annual operating costs for prisons grew more than 500%, from \$63.7 million to \$394 million. Absent policy changes, the state correctional population was projected to grow by another 3,200 inmates within five years (to approximately 28,000) while costing taxpayers an additional \$141 million in annual operating expenditures and \$317 million for the construction of more prison space.

These trends led state lawmakers to pass the Omnibus Crime Reduction and Sentencing Reform Act, which Governor Mark Sanford signed into law on June 2, 2010. The law (Act 273) sought to use tax dollars more effectively and improve public safety by concentrating prison space on high-risk and violent offenders, requiring supervision for those leaving prison, and improving the quality of supervision for those on probation and parole in an effort to reduce recidivism.

Five years after the enactment of the law, South Carolina is seeing significant successes.

Prisons and Crime

- The average daily prison population has declined 9.5% to 21,815.
 - The prison population is now 22% lower than what was projected.
 - The number of nonviolent inmates has declined 30%, while the number of violent inmates has increased 6%.
- Annual admissions to the Department of Corrections have decreased 27% to 9,136.
 - Annual admissions of nonviolent offenders have declined 31%, while admissions of violent offenders have declined 4.3%.
 - Annual admissions of offenders who failed to comply with probation or parole conditions (known as "compliance revocations") have fallen 46%.
- The Department of Corrections has closed 2.5 prison facilities.

- According to FBI statistics, between 2010 and 2013 (the most recent year for which data are available), South Carolina's violent crime rate declined 16%, while its property crime rate decreased 7%.

Probation and Parole

- The share of probationers who successfully completed their periods of supervision has increased 12%, to 77% of those on probation.
- The share of parolees who successfully completed their periods of supervision has increased 9%, to 90% of those on parole.
- The number of offenders who have had their probation or parole supervision revoked for conditions violations has decreased 46%.
- The number of offenders who have had their probation or parole supervision revoked for new crimes has decreased 17%.
- The use of administrative sanctions in place of prison as a penalty for probation and parole violations has increased 51%.
- The number of offenders who have earned compliance credits while on probation or parole, allowing the offenders to shorten periods of supervision, has increased 261%.

Savings and Reinvestment

- State correctional savings from the Omnibus Crime Reduction and Sentencing Reform Act total at least \$18.7 million, in addition to the avoided costs of not housing 6,000 more inmates who were projected to be in prison.
- Total available reinvestment of savings from the law into public safety improvements amounts to \$6.1 million.
- The Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development has estimated that the law resulted in 982 new jobs, and a \$37 million increase in the state's gross product and other economic and social benefits. According to the study, individuals who were diverted away from prison under the law created these benefits by obtaining employment and contributing to the State economy through personal spending.

The Omnibus Crime Reduction and Sentencing Reform Act established the South Carolina Sentencing Reform Oversight Committee to oversee the act's implementation.