



"What in the world people are really thinking"

For Immediate Release

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Americans Abandon 'Punishment Only' Attitudes in Effort to Reduce Crime

*National survey by Zogby International reveals 'striking support'
for rehabilitation both in and after prison*

UTICA, New York - From every age, gender, economic, political, cultural and ethnic group and every geographic area, Americans overwhelmingly support the need to rehabilitate non-violent criminals both before and after they leave prison, a new poll by Zogby International shows.

With three out of four Americans expressing either fear or concern about the news that 700,000 prisoners are leaving prisons annually, and that 60% of them will commit crimes that send them back to prison, Zogby International has just completed a national survey to find out what people think ought to be done about the situation.

The poll, sponsored by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, a leading criminal justice research organization, reveals that by almost an 8 to 1 margin (87% to 11%), the U.S. voting public is in favor of rehabilitative services for prisoners as opposed to a punishment only system. Of those polled, 70% favored these services both during incarceration and after release from prison.

Likely voters appear to recognize that our current correctional system does not help the problem of crime. By strong majorities, Americans feel that a lack of life skills, the experience of being in prison, and the many obstacles faced upon reentry are major factors in the crimes that prisoners commit following their release.

By an overwhelming majority (82%), people feel that the lack of job training and job opportunities were significant barriers to those released prisoners who wanted to avoid committing subsequent crimes. Similar large majorities saw the lack of housing, medical and mental health services, drug treatment, family support and mentoring as additional barriers and thought that all of these services should be available to returning prisoners. Most of the public felt that these reentry services needed to be started long before prisoners are released.

When asked about pending legislation that would make federal funds available to communities for these services in support of successful reentry (The Second Chance Act), 78% were in support and 40% of those strongly supported such assistance.

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According to Dr. Barry Krisberg, the President of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency “these survey results tell us that Americans have looked at the 30-year experiment on getting tough with offenders and decided that it is no longer working. We have built up an unprecedented prison population of over 2 million inmates, but most of these offenders are returning home each year with few skills or support to keep them from going back to lives of crime”

The survey was conducted Feb. 15-18, 2006, and included 1,039 respondents. The poll carries a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points.

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