Mandatory Minimum Sentences

What they are, why they matter, and how you can get involved

The US has 5% of the world's population, but 25% of the world's prison population. We imprison more people than any other country in the world.

As taxpayers, we should know where our money is going. Take a minute to learn about mandatory minimum sentencing laws, advocate for their repeal, and educate other citizens about this drain on our resources.

In 2012, we spent nearly $60 billion on prisoners, many of whom are nonviolent offenders who pose no threat to public safety.

Mandatory minimum sentencing laws require binding prison terms of a particular length for people convicted of federal and state crimes.

Mandatory minimums do not protect public safety or reduce drug use, but they do waste BILLIONS OF DOLLARS.

These inflexible "one-size-fits-all" sentencing laws may seem like a quick-fix solution for crime but they undermine justice by preventing judges from fitting the punishment to the individual and the circumstance of their offense.

Mandatory minimums disrupt the balance of justice by transferring power from impartial judges to prosecutors and politicians.
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Mandatory minimum sentences have caused prison populations to soar, leading to overcrowding, exorbitant costs, and diversion of funds from law enforcement. This occurred after Congress enacted mandatory minimums for drug crimes in the 1980s which caused the federal prison population to skyrocket.

In 1980, American taxpayers spent $540 million incarcerating 24,000 federal prisoners. Today, we spend over $6.9 billion locking up more than 218,000 people in federal prison. Half of these people are nonviolent drug offenders.

$7 Billion

One in 28 children has a parent incarcerated.

But there’s good news--more and more people are learning about mandatory minimums and getting involved in the fight for reform. Join in! FAMM.org/Get-Involved