



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR OTTER ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVE

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT EFFORT AIMS TO REDUCE PRISON GROWTH

(BOISE) – Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter joined other State leaders today in kicking off an effort to reduce the growth of Idaho's prison population using "Justice Reinvestment" – a comprehensive, data-driven approach to developing and implementing new policies to control spending and improve public safety.

The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center has helped states across the country apply this approach, including West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Texas and Kansas. The initiative is made possible by a partnership with The Pew Charitable Trusts and the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA).

"Our corrections system is consuming an increasing share of our budget. We have a simple choice to make: continue down this path, or use data to find a smarter way to protect the public and be better stewards of tax dollars," Governor Otter said. "The help provided through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative will enable us to take a comprehensive look at our criminal justice system and learn from innovations around the country that are reducing crime and costs."

The number of people incarcerated in Idaho prisons increased 28 percent from 2004 to 2012, from 6,312 to 8,097 inmates. And while more than half of all states saw a decline in their prison populations between 2010 and 2011, Idaho's prison population grew 4 percent – one of the largest increases in the nation.

"The first step is for us to collect and analyze all the data and fully understand our situation. We know that our prison population is expected to increase over the next four years at an unsustainable rate, both for our system and Idaho taxpayers," Senate President Pro Tem Brent Hill said. "Once we get a complete picture, we will be able to craft policy options that apply research and best practices to make the Idaho public safer and the criminal justice system more effective."

Today's announcement follows this year's creation by the Legislature of an interim committee to address the state's growing inmate population and rising corrections costs. The ten-member committee will submit a report on its findings for review during the 2014 legislative session.

To support the committee's work, State leaders also established a bipartisan, inter-branch Justice Reinvestment Working Group. It includes 22 representatives from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, in addition to key criminal justice stakeholders. Both panels will be led by Senate Judiciary and Rules Chairman Patti Anne Lodge and House Judiciary and Rules Chairman Rich Wills.

Chief Justice Roger Burdick said, “Despite our challenges, Idaho has a strong foundation of innovative thinking upon which to build. We were recognized nationally for the effectiveness of our problem-solving courts, which are being replicated in a variety of states. Continuing our excellent track record of working collaboratively with the executive and legislative branches, Justice Reinvestment will help us capitalize on our successes by identifying ways to achieve similar outcomes in other parts of our corrections system.”

“It is always helpful to have a fresh perspective from someone outside the state that can objectively assess our system. But ultimately the responsibility will be on us as lawmakers to act,” House Speaker Scott Bedke said. “In 2011, Idaho had the 11th-highest incarceration rate in the entire country. We can and must do better. With Justice Reinvestment, I am confident that we will.”

“The Justice Reinvestment Initiative has had a measureable impact on reducing both crime and corrections costs for states across the country,” said Denise O’Donnell, Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the U.S. Department of Justice. “Today’s announcement lays the foundation for Idaho policymakers to develop options based on research and data that will make Idaho’s communities safer while reducing escalating corrections costs.”

“State leaders across the country are recognizing that there are research-based strategies for nonviolent offenders that can cut both crime and corrections costs,” said Adam Gelb, director of The Pew Charitable Trusts’ public safety performance project. “With this new effort, Idaho’s leaders are taking an important step toward getting taxpayers a better public safety return on their investment in corrections.”

To learn more about the justice reinvestment strategy in Idaho and other states, please visit csgjusticecenter.org/jr/idaho.

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[The CSG Justice Center’s work in justice reinvestment](#) is conducted in partnership with [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#), and [the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance](#). These efforts have provided similar data-driven analyses and policy options to state leaders in 17 other states.

[The Council of State Governments Justice Center](#) is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels from all branches of government. The Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies—informed by available evidence—to increase public safety and strengthen communities.