

Missouri

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Missouri's prison population more than doubled from 14,074 inmates in 1990 to 30,729 inmates in 2011. Corrections costs tripled over the same time period, reaching more than \$660 million by FY 2011. Through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI), Missouri made targeted reforms expected to reduce the prison population by between 245 and 677 inmates, and save the state between \$7.7 million and \$16.6 million by 2017. The enacted policies provide earned credits for probation compliance, allow supervision officers to impose swift and certain jail sanctions, and cap the amount of time nonviolent offenders can serve for technical probation violations.¹

Impetus for Justice Reinvestment

Missouri joined JRI after enduring decades of growth in its prison population and corrections spending without commensurate improvements in public safety. Missouri's prison population was 14,074 in 1990; by 2011, it exceeded 30,000 inmates. And while the population doubled, corrections spending tripled over the same period. By FY 2011, corrections spending exceeded \$660 million. And although the prison population and costs soared, Missouri failed to realize the decline in crime rates seen nationally: The United States experienced an 18 percent drop in violent crime from 1990 to 2000, but violent crime in Missouri dropped only 2 percent.²

State leaders decided it was time to take action to reduce recidivism, improve public safety, and lower the burden of corrections costs on Missouri taxpayers. The state requested technical assistance from the Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance to pursue these goals. In early 2011, state leaders developed the Missouri Working Group on Sentencing and Corrections, a bipartisan, interbranch collaborative tasked with advancing JRI in Missouri. With the working group's establishment, Missouri set out to advance state policies, programs, and practices to reduce its prison population and improve public safety while continuing to hold offenders accountable.

Establish Interbranch Bipartisan Working Group

With technical assistance from Pew, the working group held its first meeting in June 2011; it met monthly through December 2011. A Republican senator and a Democratic rep-

HIGHLIGHTS

- Missouri's prison population more than doubled and corrections spending more than tripled between 1990 and 2011.
- Through JRI, Missouri adopted reforms that strengthen supervision and cap time served for technical violations.
- These reforms are projected to reduce the Missouri prison population by between 245 and 677 inmates by 2017 at a savings of between \$7.7 million and \$16.6 million.

resentative co-chaired the group, which included members from the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of state government as well as local government representatives.

Engage Stakeholders

In developing policy recommendations, the working group engaged a diverse group of stakeholders—from district attorneys and victims' advocates to public defenders and circuit court judges—to inform its deliberations. Stakeholder engagement in Missouri served multiple purposes: It ensured that critical voices had direct input into the process, introduced a local perspective to state-level policy development, and preemptively identified funding concerns for new initiatives.³

Analyze Data and Identify Drivers

With data drawn from multiple state agencies, the working group and Pew, along with partners at Applied Research Services, Inc., and the Crime and Justice Institute, completed a thorough review of state data and programs to inform

an analysis of the drivers of Missouri's prison population and corrections costs. The analysis included a review of national corrections and sentencing trends alongside an evaluation of Missouri-specific data, discussions of evidence-based practices in community supervision, and an audit of corrections policy and state law.

Data analysis found that probation or parole violations accounted for 71 percent of the state's 2010 prison admissions. The majority were technical violations rather than new criminal convictions. In total, technical violation revocations accounted for 43 percent of Missouri's 2010 prison admissions. Findings also showed that the probation population was largely nonviolent, with only 13 percent convicted for a violent or sex offense. The working group found that 83 percent of revoked probationers were placed on probation for a nonviolent offense conviction.⁴

Develop Policy Options

The working group's data analysis shed light on areas for reform within Missouri's criminal justice system. With concrete data on drivers of the growing prison population in hand, the group focused its policy recommendations on addressing supervision violation revocations. In its December 2011 Consensus Report, the working group shared six policy recommendations intended to strengthen community supervision and reduce revocations to prison while ensuring quality implementation, sustainability, and ongoing oversight of reforms. The working group recommended (1) earned discharge from probation and parole; (2) administrative jail sanctions; (3) caps on revocation time; (4) the development of an oversight body to monitor reform implementation; (5) encouraging the legislature to emphasize

the right to victim restitution; and (6) a review and possible revision of Missouri's Criminal Code.⁵

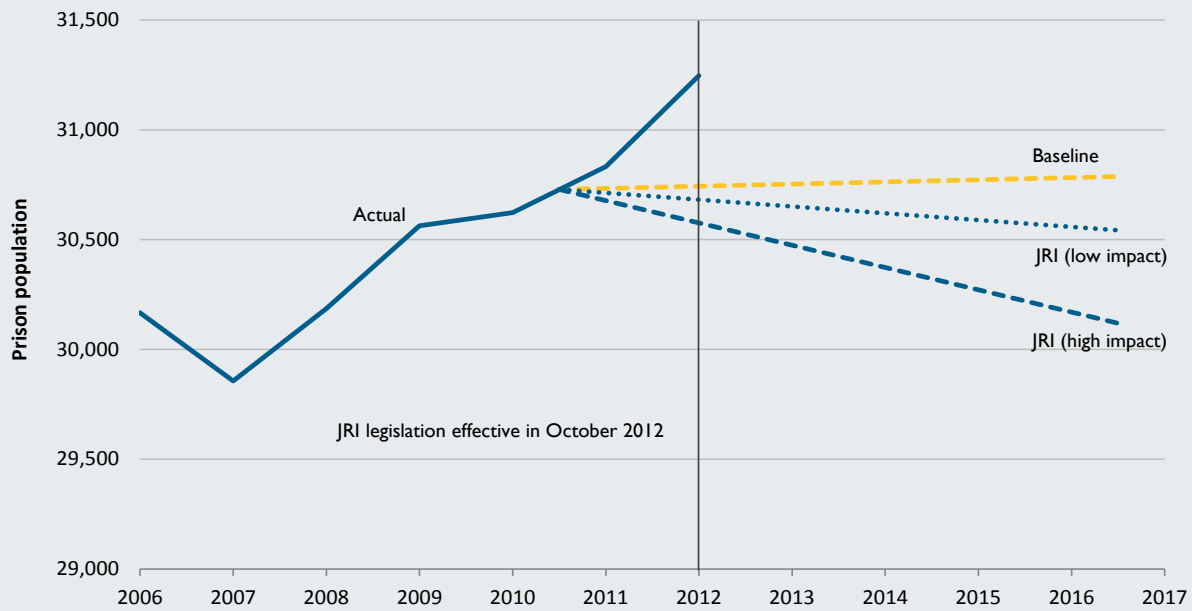
Codify and Document Changes

On the basis of these recommendations, the Missouri legislature enacted House Bill (HB) 1525, the Justice Reinvestment Act, in 2012. The bill passed with near unanimous support and included measures aimed at reducing recidivism and strengthening community supervision. Signed into law on July 6, 2012, HB 1525 makes the following reforms: provides offender incentives for supervision compliance; allows supervision officers to impose swift and certain jail sanctions; caps the amount of time nonviolent offenders can serve for technical probation violations; and creates a monitoring body to oversee the law's implementation and review cost savings.⁶

The enacted legislation is expected to reduce Missouri's prison population by between 245 and 677 inmates by the end of 2017 (figure 1). The reduction in prison population is estimated to save between \$7.7 million and \$16.6 million.⁷ These impact projections were produced in 2011, though JRI legislation did not take effect until October 2012. Between 2011 and 2012, the prison population grew faster than projected and exceeded the baseline predictions created in 2011. The projections were not revised to account for the increase in population, but JRI policies are still expected to reduce the prison population by the same number of inmates.

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FIGURE I
Missouri Prison Population



Sources: Projected population values were extrapolated from available data in Missouri Working Group on Sentencing and Corrections (2011). Actual population data are from Bureau of Justice Statistics' *Prisoners Series*.
Note: Dotted lines represent projections.

Notes

1. At the time of this report, Missouri had not submitted a request for additional technical assistance and/or financial support to implement the policy changes; therefore, there is limited information available on outcomes and reinvestment.
2. Missouri Working Group on Sentencing and Corrections. 2011. *Missouri Working Group on Sentencing and Corrections Consensus Report*. Jefferson City: Missouri Working Group on Sentencing and Corrections.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Missouri HB 1525, 2012.
7. Missouri Working Group on Sentencing and Corrections (2011).

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