

# ACLU of Wisconsin: Commends Gov. Evers for vetoing prison expanding legislation

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MADISON – The ACLU of Wisconsin today commended Governor Tony Evers on his decision to veto a package of bills that would have exacerbated mass incarceration, diminished public safety, forced the construction of new state prisons, and cost billions in taxpayer dollars. More than two thousand Wisconsinites signed a petition opposing the practice of crimeless revocation and sent messages to Governor Evers urging him to veto a package of prison expanding bills.

“The ACLU of Wisconsin thanks Governor Evers for using his veto power to stop this harmful collection of bills that would have doubled-down on failed approaches to crime from the 1990s,” said Chris Ott, ACLU of Wisconsin executive director. “These bills would have taken Wisconsin backwards, further away from much-needed criminal justice reforms that so many other states have already made. Instead of investing in prisons, we need to invest in people. The ACLU has put forward a series of proposals that would move half of Wisconsin’s prison population into more effective forms of rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Our proposals would also save state taxpayers more than \$800 million, while improving public safety and strengthening our communities. Governor Evers’s veto serves as a kind of reset that keeps the way clear for reforms like this.”

If passed, these bills would have snared more children in the criminal justice system, made it harder for Wisconsinites to successfully complete probation and

parole, and increased penalties and mandatory minimums. Draconian policies like these are reminiscent of those pursued in the 1980s and 1990s, and are now widely regarded as the driving force behind the current mass incarceration crisis.

“We’ve worked with thousands of people across the state who have been fighting tirelessly to make sure no new prisons are built in Wisconsin,” said Sean Wilson, Statewide Smart Justice Organizer at the ACLU of Wisconsin. “And today, Governor Evers showed us he was listening. Now that Wisconsin has rejected the failed criminal justice policies of the past, we can look ahead toward building a system that actually works.”

Wisconsin’s prison population grew more than fivefold between 1980 and 2016. Today, more than 23,000 Wisconsinites are imprisoned, and when people on community supervision or in local jails are included the number increases to 1 in 45 adults. In 2017 alone, more than 3,000 Wisconsinites were sent back to prison for technical violations, accounting for 45 percent of all new admissions to state prisons, the largest such group who were incarcerated that year.

The ACLU’s Smart Justice Blueprint is available at: <https://50stateblueprint.aclu.org/states/wisconsin/>

This release is online at: <https://www.aclu-wi.org/en/news/aclu-wisconsin-commend-governor-evers-vetoing-prison-expanding-legislation>