Safe & Just Michigan

Sept. 27, 2018

Update from Safe & Just Michigan

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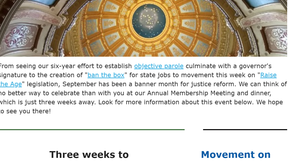


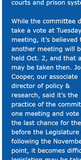
From seeing our six-year effort to establish objective parole culminate with a governor's signature to the creation of "ban the box" for state jobs to movement this week on "Raise the Age" legislation, September has been a banner month for justice reform. We can think of no better way to celebrate that with you at our Annual Membership Meeting and dinner, which is just three weeks away. Look for more information about this event below. We hope to see you there!

Three weeks to Annual Membership Meeting

We're counting the days until the Annual Membership Meeting and dinner, Oct. 18 at the Radisson hotel in Lansing, and we hope to see you there. The theme of this year's event is "Moving hearts and mind toward reform," and your ticket includes dinner, an evening of presentations from state and national leaders in justice reform, the opportunity to engage in fellowship with people from across the political spectrum, the chance to vote in a brief membership meeting and more.

Get your tickets now

This year's event will include the presentation of the **William G. Milliken** Award to state Rep. **Dave Pagel** (R-Berrien Springs) for his work to advance justice reform.



Former Gov. William G. Milliken

The award is named for Michigan's longest-serving governor, who led the state from 1969 to 1983. After initially supporting tough-on-crime drug laws in the 1970s, Gov. Milliken became a champion of repealing mandatory minimums and other harsh measures. He spoke out powerfully about how they had done more harm than good. He actively supported reform organizations and advocated for bipartisan public investment to prevent crime and address its root causes. Naturally, Safe & Just Michigan looked to his example as we named our annual award.

Other recent recipients of the William G. Milliken Award include state Rep. **Klint Kesto** (R-Commerce Township) and former state Reps. **Kurt Heise** (R-Plymouth) and **Joe Haveman** (R-Holland).

Get your tickets now

Vote possible on 'Raise the Age'

The House Law and Justice Committee took testimony Tuesday on a package of bills that would end Michigan's practice of charging 17-year-olds as adults. Known as "Raise the Age," the legislation would end Michigan's status of one of just four states that routinely treats 17-year-olds as adults in the courts and prison system.

While the committee didn't take a vote at Tuesday's meeting, it's believed that another meeting will be held Oct. 2, and that a vote may be taken then. John Cooper, our associate director of policy & research, said it's the practice of the committee to take testimony during one meeting and vote at the next. Meanwhile, Oct. 2 is the last chance for the bills to get a committee vote before the Legislature goes into a lame duck session following the November general election. At that point, it becomes difficult to predict which pieces of legislation may be taken up for a vote, as lawmakers are busily cutting deals before legislative session ends at the close of the year.

Cooper said the sticking point in the passage of the bills is a funding mechanism that will keep Michigan counties from bearing the costs associated with making 17-year-olds a part of the juvenile justice system. In Michigan, the state is responsible for costs associated with adult corrections, while counties and the state share the cost of juvenile justice.

In testimony heard Tuesday, state Rep. Martin Howrylak (R-Troy) said that good-faith negotiations are ongoing to resolve the issue and that he hopes to introduce that plan by the end of this week. If that funding mechanism is in place, it would make it more likely that these bills would pass.

The Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency has been leading a coalition effort to pass these bills. To learn more, please visit their site.

Housing and crime survivors

Kimberly Cole is an engineer by education and training. But instead of solving problems involving mathematics and science, these days, she's solving more hands-on issues that require immediate solutions.

Like the phone call she received recently from a woman who was in a panic as her boyfriend was shooting at her. The woman needed to get out of that home but had nowhere to go. All of the shelters in Flint, where she lived, were full. She wanted to know if Cole could help.

Cole could. She is a teacher at St. Luke's New Life Center in Flint, and the woman who called was one of her students. Cole teaches job and life skills to people who are walking away from addiction or re-entering communities after being incarcerated. Her work had introduced her to many helpers in the city, and she used her networks to find her student a safe place that same night.

"Shelter is a life-or-death need," Cole said. "The people I work with are taking all the right steps and doing all the right things, but if they can't find a safe place to live, then they go back on the street or into a person's house where people are using (drugs). They go back into chaos."

Crime survivors' housing needs were discussed by more than 60 housing advocates, social workers, law enforcement officers, representatives of faith-based agencies, representatives of criminal justice reform organizations and formerly incarcerated people and their families at a September 7 meeting in Flint co-hosted by Safe & Just Michigan and our partners at the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness.

Safe shelter is a basic human need for everyone. Researchers have found a lack of secure housing as a pressing concern for both survivors of crime and formerly incarcerated people, and their work has shown that the links between those two groups may be closer than many people think. For instance, children who grow up in unstable homes where they are maltreated are roughly twice as likely to become involved in crime than those who are not.

Safe & Just Michigan knows that access to safe, affordable housing is a fundamental aspect of thriving, secure communities. We are glad to join with organizations like the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, that are striving to increase access to safe and affordable housing opportunities for all Michiganders.

Read more about the meeting in Flint here.

CASH BAIL SYSTEM IN MICHIGAN

The human toll
The cost to taxpayers

Safe & Just Michigan

CROWDED COUNTY JAILS

When people can't make bail, they have to stay in county jails until their trial dates, even if they are ultimately found innocent. This leads to swollen jail populations, which cost taxpayers millions of dollars annually and take a human toll, as those incarcerated risk losing jobs, homes and opportunities.

COST OF INCARCERATION

Analysis from The Wayne County Jail and ACLU of Michigan shows it costs far more to incarcerate someone in a county jail than to monitor them in the community through pre-trial supervision.

$74.61

Housing someone in Wayne County jail, average of $74.61 daily, but can cost as little as $10 on $3.65 daily in Wayne County.

$7.47

The cost of pre-trial supervision, which allows someone to go home before trial, averages $7.17 per day.

PLACES MOST AFFECTED

According to federal Bureau of Justice Services, these 15 largest county jails[1] are ranked by the highest percentage of their population that could not afford bail and are awaiting trial.

Rank	County	Confined	Awaiting trial or arraignment
1	Newaygo	293	78%
2	Genesee	530	72.6%
3	Ottawa	375	62.8%
4	Ingham	383	53.3%
5	Saginaw	455	50.5%
6	Livingston	236	48.3%
7	Muskegon	375	46.5%
8	Eaton	238	39%
9	Kent	1,084	38.3%
10	Kalamazoo	560	36%
11	Lenawee	216	35.2%
12	Washtenaw	410	32.7%
13	Calhoun	457	30.6%
14	Midland	262	21%
15	Berrien	349	14.5%

"Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, Michigan's three most populous counties, have been consistently ranked among the top 15 largest county jails nationwide. However, a separate study found that 17 percent of Wayne County Jail's beds are occupied by people awaiting arraignment or trial.

SOURCE: ACLU OF MICHIGAN AND THE WAYNE COUNTY JAIL

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Movement on bail reform

Efforts to introduce cash bail reform in Michigan are gaining traction on both sides of the political spectrum.

On Tuesday, Sept. 25, the free-market think tank The Mackinac Center hosted a luncheon lecture on bail reform, looking at the issue from a primarily financial freedom lens. A video of the presentation can be viewed here.

As part of that effort, the Mackinac Center teamed up with ACLU of Michigan to analyze the use of cash bail in Michigan. Click here to read their analysis of the use of cash bail in Michigan, efforts in other states to reform bail and the potential to reform the bail system here.

Blueprint for Justice

A plan authored by the ACLU of Michigan offers a road map to reduce Michigan's prison population by 23,000, or about 59 percent, by 2025, and save taxpayers about $1.8 billion over the next seven years.

The report also shed light on some characteristics of Michigan's justice system. Among the report's findings:

- Michigan tripled corrections spending between 1985 and 2016, while it cut education funding by 30 percent.

- Black people were imprisoned at nearly seven times the rate of white people in Michigan; 54 percent of people in Michigan's prisons in 2014 were Black.

- While Michigan's prison population fell about 24 percent between 2006 and 2016, the average minimum sentence for actually increased 32 percent in the same timeframe.

Are you ready to vote?

The deadline to register to vote in the Nov. 6 election is Oct. 9. Remember:

- People who have been incarcerated **CAN VOTE** in Michigan.

- People who are on parole or probation **CAN VOTE** in Michigan.

- People who are in jail awaiting trial **CAN VOTE** in Michigan.

- People who are in jail awaiting arraignment **CAN VOTE** in Michigan.

- People who are currently in jail or prison serving a sentence **CANNOT** vote.

To learn more about how to register to vote, where to vote and to find answers for other voting questions, visit the Secretary of State's Voter Information Center.

Safe & Just Michigan has a one-page fact sheet to help answer questions about voting rights for justice-involved people. We hope you'll find it useful and share it with others.

SJM in the news

With all the good news about justice reform in September, Safe & Just Michigan has been getting some good press. Here are a few of our latest media mentions:

Sept. 5

- "Senate Committee OKs Bill to Save Money, Cut Prison Population" - WSYM TV-47 Lansing: "The objective parole bill will return low-risk incarcerated people to their communities after they've served their minimum sentences, while ensuring the parole board retains their authority to deny parole based on legitimate safety concerns," said John Cooper, associate director of policy & research for SJM. "This is smart criminal justice policy: when you return people back to their communities, you get them back to their families, back to work and back into the tax base. It makes the community stronger for everyone."

Sept. 13

- "New law reforms parole guidelines in Michigan" - WDIV TV-4 Detroit: "Objective parole replaces subjective decision-making with an evidence-based process. At the same time, it gives the parole board and the Michigan Department of Corrections more flexibility to deny parole when the evidence warrants," said John Cooper, associate director of policy & research for SJM. "When the parole process is more consistent and evidence-based, it will result in more people who are ready going home to their families, where they can go back to work and get back to being contributing members of our communities."

Sept. 13

- "Law Aims To Make Parole Decisions More Fair" - Michigan Public Radio: Click on the story to listen to a short interview with SJM'S Associate Director of Policy & Research John Cooper. "This is going to eliminate subjective decision making in low-risk cases while preserving the Parole Board's ability to deny parole to low-risk prisoners based on legitimate safety concerns," Cooper said. "Smart on Crime" laws like this one have helped to reduce Michigan's prison population, Cooper said.

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