

Corrections trend evaluation

Law



Future of Corrections November The Department of Justice Bureau of Prisons forecasts a continued and steady growth in the federal prison population from 2012 to 2020, with overcrowding to be in excess of 45% through 2018 (United States Government Accountability Office, 2012). Currently the population growth has had a negative effect on federal inmates, staff and the Bureau of Prison infrastructure. In use now are double and triple bunking of the inmates, long waiting lists for drug intervention and treatment programs, education programs, few opportunities for work and an increased inmate to staff ratio.

In analyzing the future philosophies of corrections it is important to distinguish between the federal and state level. States have legislative power and have been able to take much broader actions in reducing their prison populations. States generally will apply one of three philosophies; relocating inmates and the use of halfway housing or community detention, allowing inmate's credit as time served for good behavior or participation in certain programs, and modifying criminal statutes and sentencing (United States Government Accountability Office, 2012, p 32).

Many federal sentences are mandatory minimum sentences with no parole as the Bureau of Prisons does not have the authority to modify the inmate's sentence. They are also without authority to move federal inmates to community corrections or transfer them to local prisons or supervised release more so than what is federally allowed.

Possible future actions that are being considered by the Bureau of Prisons at the federal level are several options that policy makers have begun to consider to address the crowding in the federal system. One option is to minimize and reduce the projected size of the inmate population by

reforming current sentencing laws and allowing alternatives to incarceration while also providing the Bureau of Prisons greater flexibility in sentencing. A second option is to increase the capacity of the federal system, in essence keeping up with the demand and the projected growth of the demand by the construction of new prisons, increasing staffing levels, and contracting for increased private capacity. A third option is a combination of the first two and would likely be the most successful philosophy to utilize in order to negate and reduce many of the side effects of the current and projected overcrowding.

It is estimated that 60% of federal inmates are non-violent offenders. The suggestion of some is that many of these are white collar crimes and instead of mandatory lengthy sentences costing thousands and thousands of taxpayer dollars these inmates should be sentenced to shorter sentences and fined very heavy fines as in the case of Raj Rajaratnam's, charged with insider trading. Raj was found guilty of 14 separate charges against him; facing 25 years in prison (Pavlo, 2011). Many were very critical of the case, proposing a light sentence and fines exceeding several million dollars. This could possibly be a future thought and philosophy in these cases of insider trading and white collar criminals who keep the federal justice system backed up with cases.

References

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