

# NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION ACT OF 2011

## SUMMARY

The **National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2011** will create a blue-ribbon commission charged with undertaking an 18-month, top-to-bottom review of the criminal justice system. Its task will be to propose concrete, wide-ranging reforms to address the most pressing issues facing the nation's criminal justice system.

## WHY THIS LEGISLATION IS URGENTLY NEEDED

- The United States has by far the world's highest incarceration rate. With five percent of the world's population, our country now houses twenty-five percent of the world's reported prisoners. More than 2.3 million Americans are now in prison, and another 5 million remain on probation or parole.
- Our prison population has skyrocketed over the past two decades as we have incarcerated more people for non-violent crimes and acts driven by mental illness or drug dependence.
- The costs to our federal, state, and local governments of keeping repeat offenders in the criminal justice system continue to grow during a time of increasingly tight budgets.
- Existing practices too often incarcerate people who do not belong in prison, taking resources away from locking up high-risk, violent offenders who are a threat to our communities.
- Transnational criminal activity, much of it directed by violent gangs and cartels from Latin America, Asia and Europe, has permeated the country. Mexican cartels alone now operate in more than 230 communities across the country.
- Incarceration for drug crimes has had a disproportionate impact on minority communities, despite virtually identical levels of drug use across racial and ethnic lines.
- Post-incarceration re-entry programs are haphazard and often nonexistent, undermining public safety and making it extremely difficult for ex-offenders to become full, contributing members of society.

## LEGISLATION: REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission shall undertake a comprehensive review of all areas of the criminal justice system, including Federal, State, local, and tribal governments' criminal justice costs, practices, and policies. After conducting its review, the Commission shall make recommendations for changes in oversight, policies, practices, and laws designed to prevent, deter, and reduce crime and violence, improve cost-effectiveness, and ensure the interests of justice at every step of the criminal justice system.