



September 7, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

As you return from recess and discuss your criminal justice related priorities for the remainder of the 114th Congress, we, the undersigned organizations, ask that when considering sentencing reform legislation that you adopt many of the key principles outlined below. These principles were included in the Senate's bipartisan Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act (S. 2123), however they are currently absent from the House Sentencing Reform Act (H.R. 3713).

Collectively, our organizations which represent law enforcement and prosecutors, support S. 2123 because we strongly believe the bill achieves a proper balance of preserving and expanding mandatory minimums for violent offenders and career criminals, while reducing recidivism and addressing the burgeoning prison population. In addition, the bill does not just stop at sentencing reform and corrections, but also takes a significant step to examine the entire criminal justice system through the addition of the National Criminal Justice Commission Act.

The key principals we hope members of the U.S. House will consider are as follows:

Firearm Offenses and Armed Career Criminal Statute: The proposal should not include any provision that would reduce the enhanced mandatory minimum for firearms offenses, and not make any changes to the Armed Career Criminal Act. By not reducing mandatory minimums for gun offenses, we will filter out the early release of the truly dangerous individuals who should stay out of the community.

National Criminal Justice Commission: It is imperative that a piecemeal approach is not taken as we begin to consider legislative proposals that seek to make changes to aspects of our criminal justice system. It is essential that the House include language that would create a National Criminal Justice Commission to perform a comprehensive review of the state of our entire criminal justice system, seek out areas of weakness and inefficiency, and develop solutions to help provide a strategic plan to combat crime and promote public safety. While there have been numerous reports and panels set to examine specific elements of the criminal justice system, there has been no clear picture on how we should move forward on a broader multidisciplinary approach that covers all elements of the criminal justice system.

Reinvestment in Criminal Justice Efforts: Language should be included that mirrors the Senate bill and requires an annual report by the Attorney General outlining how savings accrued from modifications to federal sentencing will be reinvested into efforts by federal, state and local law enforcement and prosecutors. This looks specifically at crime prevention to combat gangs and high level drug traffickers; hire, train, and equip officers and prosecutors; and promote programs using evidence-based practices to help reduce crime and recidivism.

Input from Local Law Enforcement: Before being eligible for any safety valve provision, it is imperative to have all pertinent information and most importantly, information from local authorities who are at the forefront of local community safety. Language mirroring the Senate bill should be included to read, “the Government shall conduct a particularized inquiry of the facts and circumstances of the original sentencing of the defendant in order to assess whether a reduction in sentence would be consistent including a review of any prior criminal conduct or any other relevant information from Federal, State, and local authorities.”

We hope that you will consider these principals as you move forward with the consideration of sentencing and corrections reform legislation. We look forward to working with you to strike an appropriate balance on legislation that targets violent repeat offenders, while giving low-level offenders another chance, and maintains the safety of our communities.

Sincerely,



Terrence M. Cunningham, Chief, Wellesley
Police Department (MA)
President, International Association of Chiefs of
Police



Michael J. Bouchard, Sheriff, Oakland County
(MI)
Vice President – Government Affairs, Major
County Sheriffs’ Association



J. Thomas Manger
Chief of Police
Montgomery County Police Department
President,
Major Cities Chiefs Association



William Fitzpatrick
President, National District Attorneys
Association