

The PEW Charitable Trusts

Pew Applauds Arkansas Leaders for Comprehensive Public Safety Reforms

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Washington, DC - 03/22/2011 - The comprehensive package of reforms Governor Mike Beebe signed into law today puts Arkansas among states leading the way to data-driven, evidence-based criminal justice policies designed to protect public safety, hold offenders accountable and control corrections costs. The Public Safety Improvement Act is the result of a bipartisan, inter-branch working group process, passing with overwhelming majorities in both chambers of the Arkansas Legislature.

"State leaders in Arkansas worked across party lines to forge consensus on a comprehensive package of reforms that will bring Arkansas taxpayers a better public safety return on their corrections dollars," said Jake Horowitz, project manager, Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States. "We commend Governor Beebe, Chief Justice Hannah and House and Senate leaders for collaborating on legislation that will keep Arkansans safe and contain prison expenditures for years to come."

The Public Safety Improvement Act will reduce recidivism by strengthening probation and parole, improve government performance through data collection and analysis and contain corrections costs. The legislation is projected to save Arkansas \$875 million in prison construction and operation expenses through 2020. Some of those prison savings will be reinvested in evidence-based community supervision and programs designed to reduce recidivism and hold offenders accountable.

The new law is the product of more than a year of intensive work by the Arkansas Working Group on Sentencing and Corrections. Co-chaired by Sen. Jim Luker and Rep. Kathy Webb, the Working Group undertook an extensive review of sentencing data, audited current policies and practices, consulted criminal justice stakeholders, and forged consensus on a set of policy recommendations. The Working Group received technical assistance from the Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States.

Organizations that endorsed the Act included the Arkansas Sheriffs Association, Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police, Arkansas Prosecuting Attorneys Association, Arkansas Public Defender Commission and the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce.