

Alabama

The project selected Alabama to receive intensive, nonpartisan research, analysis, and expertise. Among other factors, its leaders have demonstrated both a bipartisan commitment to explore meaningful policy change and a dedication to collecting and using criminal justice data as a basis for sound reforms.

Progress Update »

With over 28,000 prisoners in facilities built to handle fewer than half that number, Alabama faces stark choices with clear implications for public safety and public spending. The creation of a second parole board sped the release of eligible inmates and slowed population growth, but that board's authority has lapsed and significant inmate growth has resumed.

Sentencing guidelines for certain offenses took effect in October 2006, and researchers predict that if the courts achieve a 75 percent compliance rate by December 2009, the prison population will be reduced by 2,420 inmates. The Vera Institute of Justice, a partner of the Public Safety Performance Project, is helping the state evaluate compliance with the guidelines and working to expand community corrections programs as safe and effective punishment options for certain classes of offenders. Statewide availability of community corrections could divert more than 4,000 offenders from prison and save taxpayers nearly \$36 million per year.

In addition, Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb has appointed a task force to establish drug courts in every county in the state, in an effort to deal with lower-level drug-addicted offenders in ways that are cheaper but more effective at reducing recidivism than prison.

State Profile »

A profile of Alabama that provides statistical and analytical data about its sentencing and corrections systems, describes factors shaping those systems, and highlights opportunities for reform.

[Download Alabama state profile](#) (PDF) [Adobe Reader®](#) required.

Case Study »

Alabama's corrections system is dramatically overcrowded. Some 27,000 prisoners are incarcerated in facilities designed to hold approximately 13,000, while a growing share of the state's correctional resources has been devoted to incarcerating nonviolent prisoners (i.e., drug and alcohol offenses). See how the creation of a sentencing commission, plus a task force formed by Governor Bob Riley, helped Alabama eliminate an 800-inmate backlog in county jails, divert low-level offenders from prison to community-based punishments, and put the state on a path that could lead to a reduction of more than 2,400 inmates by December 2009.

[Download Alabama case study](#) (PDF) [Adobe Reader®](#) required.

News

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- Alabama prison population near high
- *Montgomery Advertiser*
- May 14, 2007

The number of inmates squeezed into Alabama's overcrowded prisons is back near the state's all-time high of 28,440 just six months after the end of a second parole board that helped release inmates faster and created more prison space...

To read the full article, visit the [Montgomery Advertiser Web site](#).

- **Allen strives for prison corrections**
- *Montgomery Advertiser*
- March 24, 2007

Alabama's corrections commissioner is asking the question himself: Should the state build more prisons or should it release drug offenders to make way for violent criminals? Richard Allen doesn't exactly say he's in favor of throwing open the cell doors of dope users. He puts it like this: "Some would argue we are locking folks up for drug offenses when we should be putting them into drug treatment programs."...

To read the full article, visit the [Montgomery Advertiser Web site](#).

- **Sentencing still critical**
- *The Montgomery Advertiser*
- February 23, 2007

Its conclusions are anything but new, yet it is important for Alabamians and their political leaders to take note of a new report from the highly regarded Pew Charitable Trusts on the seemingly uncontrollable prison population here and in many other states. The nonprofit organization does first-rate research and its observations are well worth heeding...

To read the full article, visit the [Montgomery Advertiser Web site](#).

- **Alabama prisons earn well-deserved attention**
- *Mobile Press-Register*
- December 18, 2006

Alabama's inclusion in a national corrections project offers the state significant help and pays officials a well-justified compliment. The Pew Charitable Trusts' Public Safety Performance Project chose Alabama as the first of eight states it will assist with corrections reform.

To read the full article, visit the [Press-Register Web site](#).

- **Innovative Alabama**
- *The Birmingham News*
- December 18, 2006

Here's something that doesn't happen often: national organizations praising Alabama officials for innovative efforts and cooperation. More amazingly, the issue in which they recognized the state's efforts is something that has bedeviled the state for decades: prison overcrowding.

Last week, the Pew Charitable Trusts' Public Safety Performance Project announced it had chosen Alabama for a national project to reform sentencing practices and reduce prison crowding and recidivism.

To read the full article, visit the [Birmingham News Web site](#).

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State to get funding for prison study

- By Mike Linn, *Montgomery Advertiser*
- December 16, 2006

A Philadelphia-based research group will pour \$12 million into Alabama and seven other states to research and develop programs to help control prison costs and, at the same time, hold offenders accountable for their actions. The Pew Charitable Trusts, a nonprofit organization, announced its plans Friday at the Alabama Supreme Court, along with Governor Bob Riley and several other high-ranking state officials. To read the full article, visit the [Montgomery Advertiser Web site](#).

State corrections, sentencing receive national recognition

- By M.J. Ellington, *The Decatur Daily News*
- December 15, 2006

MONTGOMERY — Alabama's work to improve its prison system and develop programs to reduce repeat offenses received national recognition Friday. The Pew Charitable Trusts chose Alabama as one of eight states to share in a four-year, \$12 million foundation program. To read the full article, visit the [Decatur Daily News Web site](#).

State to get help on sentencing

- By Stan Diel, *The Birmingham News*
- December 15, 2006

The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Vera Institute of Justice, two of the nation's most venerable nonprofits, will work with Alabama officials to reform sentencing practices, the state is scheduled to announce today. Before the state adopted new sentencing guidelines in October, its prison population was forecast to grow by 2,400 during the next five years, which would cost the state an extra \$150 million. The new guidelines, combined with recommendations for reform from Pew, would help soften that blow, said Adam Gelb, director of Pew's new Public Safety Performance Project. To read the full article, visit the [Birmingham News Web site](#).

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