



Alternatives to the Death Penalty

The Death Penalty is not an effective solution to addressing violence and fulfilling justice. These strategies are better for achieving these goals.

Restorative Justice

- Our current system focuses on punishment rather than accountability. Restorative justice enables people who have caused harm to repair it within their communities to enable healing.
- Danielle Sered has found that this process can reduce recidivism (rate of repeat offenses) by up to 44 percent.¹

Alternative Prison Terms

- Alternative prison sentences, such as life without parole, keep violent offenders out of society but with a lower cost than death penalties (\$1.1 million less per inmate).²
- These sentences also carry less appeals, so the victim's families do not have to repeat trials or relive trauma as often.

Violence Prevention/Interruption

- Community violence intervention works to mentor vulnerable communities and to mediate conflicts.
- For example, hospital-based violence intervention programs strive to provide psychological healing for victims to interrupt the cycle of violence.³
- These deterrent programs have been shown to reduce violent crimes by an average of 30%.⁴

Mental Health First Aid

- Access to mental health services has decreased in rural areas with a psychiatrist shortage. 23 SC counties have zero or only one licensed psychiatrist.⁵
- Improving mental health resources can reduce the rate of violent crime, as 70% of SC's death row suffers from severe mental illness.⁶
- The Department of Mental Health is pursuing a new program with increased funding.

Drug Rehabilitation Programs

- Increasing access to drug rehabilitation would reduce crime and violence.
- 52% of inmates charged with violent crimes were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when committing their crimes.⁷
- Rehab programs like LEAD in SC reduced the chance of being arrested by 60% and is less costly than incarceration.⁸

Increasing Victims Services

- The primary need of crime survivors is not punishment of the perpetrator. It is medical assistance, counseling, financial assistance, and other support.
- Funding for victims services is from the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. This project is funded by fines, not taxes. They do not extend all victimized groups. Access to these programs should be extended.⁹

Affordable Housing

- Affordable housing has been found to decrease crime because it supports economic stability.¹⁰
- South Carolina has the highest eviction rate in the US. Although the national average eviction filing rate is 8%, South Carolina's eviction filing rate is 23.3%.¹¹
- Everyone deserves a home. Helping displaced people secure housing increases community security.

Education Access

- Higher education is not accessible to many in the middle and working classes. A lack of education and decreased economic opportunity make people more likely to end up in the criminal justice system
- When incarcerated people receive higher education in prison, their rates of re-offending and re-incarceration decrease.¹²

Preventing Gender-Based Harm

- 86% of incarcerated women have experienced sexual violence in their life.¹³
- SC sexual education curricula do not require that consent is taught.

Parole Reform

- A clear way to decrease mass incarceration is to allow inmates who demonstrate change the opportunity for parole.
- Letting prisoners achieve parole decreases costs for the state and allows the formerly incarcerated to integrate back into society and make a positive contribution.
- Only 7% of the parole cases heard in SC lead to release.¹⁴

Child Protective Services

- Research shows that about 97% of incarcerated people suffer from one or more Adverse Childhood Experience. These traumas include physical/ emotional/sexual abuse, family conflict, violence, and more.¹⁵
- Current child welfare and foster care systems are not meeting the needs of children, making them more likely to become incarcerated.

Effective Public Safety

- Trauma informed policing is a program that helps officers heal and process from their own trauma and respond more effectively to violent and damaging situations.¹⁶
- This method addresses the underlying causes of violence, thus improving public safety more than incarceration.
- States with the death penalty have failed to address public safety needs.¹⁷

Gun Control Measures

- States that continue to use the death penalty tend to have less gun safety measures and more gun- related deaths.
- Lack of gun safety measures and the death penalty are making communities more dangerous.
- SC has the 6th-highest rate of gun violence in the US.¹⁸

Anti-Racist Court Practices

- Racism causes more harsh sentences for perpetrators of color, especially when the victims are white.
- SC has a history of appealing juror’s racial biases to achieve many more death sentences (e.g. Donnie Meyers of Lexington).
- 81% of perpetrators who recieve death sentences have white victims. All lives should be valued equally by the court system.¹⁹

Supervision Over Solicitors

- Solicitors have discretion over whether the death penalty is pursued. Supervising solicitors could decrease arbitrary use of harsh sentencing.
- Former SC Solicitors Charles Condon and Walter Bailey imposed 80% of all death sentences in their districts. Former SC Solicitor Donnie Meyers had a capital punishment sentencing rate of 6.8 deaths per 100 murders, compared with the SC average of 1.96.²⁰

Prison Program Reform

- The majority of people in prisons now had been previously incarcerated, suggesting the system is not rehabilitating.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy and cultural shifts in prison could make it more effective in helping prepare inmates to be productive members of society. CBT programs have been shown to reduce recidivism by 20-30%.²¹

Affordable Healthcare

- Studies have shown that Medicaid expansion reduces crime, especially robbery, aggravated assault, and larceny.²²
- A lack of access to healthcare increases substance abuse and mental health issues that spur crime and violence.
- Medicaid expansions save prisons money. A study in Kansas found the state could save prisons \$3.6 million annually.²³

Living wages/economic opportunity

- The “ban the box” policy would enable employers to consider an applicant’s merits before their criminal background.
- Supporting unions and labor law reform can improve economic equality and opprotunity.²⁴
- Violence increases when economic needs are not met.
- For the limited jobs that do exist in prison, the salaries are only 12-40 cents per hour.²⁵

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