



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

328 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., N.E.
WASHINGTON, DC 20002
PHONE 202-547-8189 • FAX 202-547-8190

CHUCK CANTERBURY
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

JAMES O. PASCO, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

POSITION OF THE NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE ON SENTENCING REFORM

No law enforcement officer worthy of the badge wants to see anyone unjustly incarcerated, or incarcerated for a period far in excess of what suits the crime. To the extent that such cases exist, we are ready and willing to play an active role in developing a remedy for past, present and future wrongs. That being said, we do not support the wholesale release of prisoners just on the premise that their sentences are too long or that their crimes were nonviolent. Following that convoluted logic, El Chapo's accountant would probably not be subjected to any significant penalty.

Further, we believe it is the absolute height of cynicism to sell this legislative concept on the basis of the cost of incarceration being too high. The primary responsibility of any government is to provide for the safety of the citizenry. We must not, solely for cost savings, create a domestic Mariel Boatlift with predictably disastrous results. We fight seemingly interminable wars, spending billions, to keep America safe. We spend billions and trillions on Medicare and Social Security to keep our elderly and infirm healthy and marginally solvent. Some things are just worth the money – and public safety is first among equally important priorities.

We seem to ignore the fact that a huge number of those currently incarcerated are mentally ill. They are in penal institutions because governments at every level have failed them – we have a crippled, if not ruined, mental health system in this country. Those who need doctors end up getting jailers, and that is unconscionable; what is far worse is the prospect of turning them loose, with no prospect of treatment, to commit whatever offenses their imbalanced minds conjure up. This legislation causes us to ponder a true Hobson's Choice – should the mentally ill be Wards of the Court, or Wards of the Street?

The National Fraternal Order of Police will sit down with anyone at any time to discuss ways in which past wrongs can be righted and future wrongs averted in a manner which does not threaten public safety. Remember, it is the failures of elected officials at every level which underlie the sentencing reform issue– they passed the laws they now lament, ruined the economy, the educational system, the infrastructure and pretty much everything else- maybe a little outside advice from subject matter experts is in order.

— BUILDING ON A PROUD TRADITION —