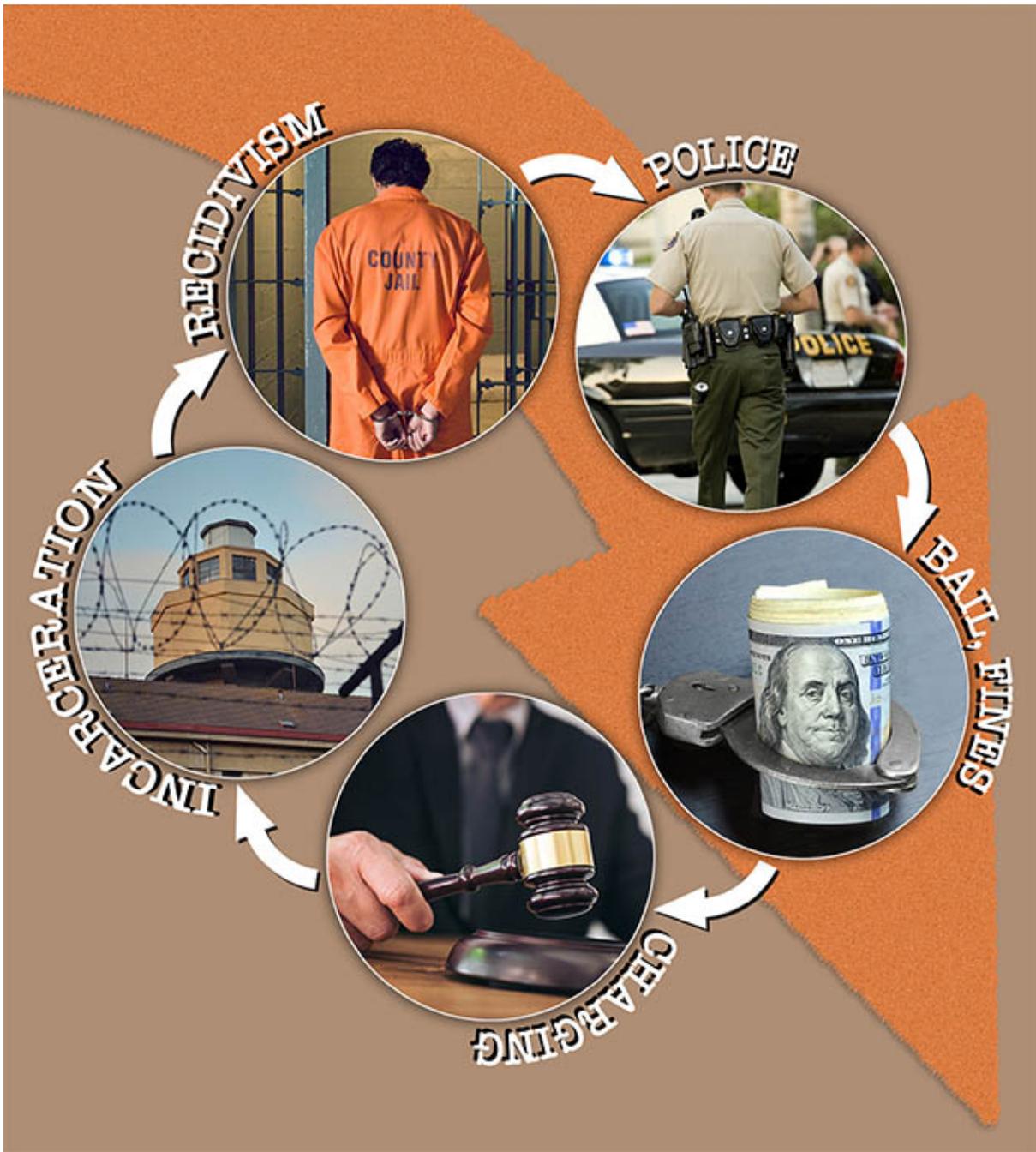


“Criminal Justice in Arizona”

East Valley Community Town Hall Report

Mesa, AZ – September 18, 2018



CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN ARIZONA

**East Valley Community Town Hall Report
September 18, 2018 – Mesa Community College**

Participants of the September 2018 East Valley Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

GOALS FOR ARIZONA'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

We can best keep our communities safe when we base our laws on facts, not fear. Equality and fairness are critical, and ethnic and racial disparities must be addressed, but there are important differences between offender types that should be considered (e.g. men vs. women, young vs. old, etc.). A one size fits all approach is not necessarily effective or desirable.

Punishment is often necessary to maintain public safety and to produce a deterrent effect. However, for the benefit of safe communities and offenders alike, our focus should primarily be on transformative and restorative justice that both corrects aberrant behavior and releases productive citizens into safe communities. A significant focus should be on preventing crime before it happens through education, mental health services, etc.

Issues that should be examined carefully include prisoner safety; prevention of crime before it happens; desirability or effectiveness of community restrictions on sex offenders; ensuring punishment fits the crime; effectiveness of pre- and post-crime services and diversion sentencing options; implementing the most time and cost-effective crime prevention and correction for a measurable return on investment.

PRIOR TO INCARCERATION

Arizona should implement and fund significant sentencing alternatives to incarceration. Education, mental health treatment, community policing, substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation, community advocacy, and approving additional judgeships and increased judicial discretion may reduce criminal behavior before it occurs. Arizona needs to talk about these issues at all levels and not merely for political gain.

Many issues are public health and social issues and should not be viewed as justice issues—or should be resolved before they become justice issues. 911 should not be our primary conflict resolution resource and the Arizona correction system should not be viewed as the catch-all solution to these issues. Rather, Arizona needs to recognize it takes a village. A significant commitment to funding pre-crime resolution of public health and social issues is necessary. Identification and support of at-risk youth is critical.

AFTER INCARCERATION

Post-crime, Arizona should focus on sentence diversion alternatives and ensuring that inmates, particularly non-violent inmates, have a more transformative and rehabilitative correctional sentence. Mandatory sentencing laws, vast prosecutorial charging power, and the potential for over-policing of poor communities need to be examined carefully. Arizona's bail system, as well as fines and surcharges, should also be carefully examined.

Probation and parole in Arizona should be a support system to transition criminals to full civilian engagement in the community. They should be part of a fresh start, not be a gotcha to ensure further

punishment. Increasing the number of well-trained parole and probation officers and their support systems will be required to accomplish this goal.

Arizona needs to properly fund a support system, pre- and post-crime, based on facts, not fear. These systems might include social services, substance rehabilitations services, job placement and training services, mentoring services, food services, transitional and permanent housing services, and many others. Early assessments and ongoing assessments during incarceration will help ensure the effective placement in these services. Institutionalization must be properly addressed.

All Arizonans can play a critical role in helping convicted criminals to transition to home, to our communities, to our places of employment and worship, etc. We cannot just warehouse individuals convicted of a crime and turn them back into society without change or worse than when they entered the justice system. We are all safer and more productive when every member of our society is engaged to their potential.

Employment, and particularly the limited availability of employment for individuals convicted of a crime, should be a critical Arizona priority. Arizona should consider expungement laws, setting aside convictions, implementing employment application limitations and other actions to resolve this issue.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the East Valley Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Attend the statewide town hall. Speak to friends about my experience.
- Job training, substance abuse counseling, substance abuse counseling, and crisis intervention – clinical services.
- Work with Arizonans for Rational Sex Offence Laws (AZRSOL) to limit the registry, educate the public about wide-net sex offence laws, and allow sex offenders to reintegrate successfully.
- Communicate what I have learned to others and take action based on what I have learned.
- Educate myself further about these issues. Try to raise awareness about issues to others, especially those that tend to go unnoticed or unheard of. Connect with law enforcement in a more positive way.
- Educate my peers about the complexity of our justice system and to enlighten them that those who are incarcerated are still people.
- Share what I have learned with family and friends. Evaluate how I can contribute to the many issues faced by individuals faced with potential incarceration.
- Tell others about this experience. Educate myself more about how to change the criminal justice system in Arizona.
- Continue my advocacy work with volunteering with Valley Interfaith Project in justice reform.
- Commit continued advocacy for pre-arrest diversion opportunities especially the disparity of the justice system for people of color.
- Change my own mindset with offenders and support them in their journey to rehabilitation, especially juvenile offenders need health and social services.

- Read the Book of Mormon daily. Go to the Temple twice a month. Post a spiritual thought on Tinder. Not go to jail.
- Educate myself further to understand the issues of the Arizona criminal justice system.
- Fine more events like the Arizona Town Halls to keep myself involved.
- Gain a stronger understanding of issues surrounding criminal justice, in Arizona especially. Search for opportunities to be more active in social issues.
- Continue to support inmate families. Continue to tell it like it is with others.
- Continue to be Educational Director of Arizonans for Rational Sex Offense Laws. Continue to present information to anyone available to listen. Support sex offenders.
- Hold my legislators accountable and vote for candidates who support criminal justice reform. Become and stay informed on criminal justice issues and share this information with others I know.
- Contact my state legislators to urge them to change the mandatory sentencing guidelines.
- Continue to talk about issues discussed today with members of community to stress the importance of reform. Contact lawmakers to make them aware of my beliefs on issues that need to be addressed. Encourage other people to take action on a grass roots level and with law makers. Vote.
- Continue to share these ideas with the Governor's desk. Hold civic academies with our forty member organizations. Attend further sessions at Lewis on Thursday. Recruit more for later sessions.
- Become a billionaire.
- Bring back information learned and try to get buy in from local officials in my city. Policy changes with those in charge at the local level. Can translate to county/state level.
- Work in my agency to "ban the box" and reduce stigma associated with someone who has paid their debt to society.
- Speak to my government teacher about speaking to the class about criminal justice in Arizona and its serious problems. Also, I'd like to give info on the Future Leaders Town Hall. Send letters to legislation.
- Tell my family about the criminal justice lecture: New ideas. Bring awareness. Also, I will look at the criminal justice system and the people in this system in a new light- a more educated light.
- Discuss what I learned with my parents and family, and watch how I treat people because I never know what they have been through.
- Commit to educating myself more thoroughly about this issue so I can engage with policy on this more thoroughly with policy on this more thoughtfully and with more info.
- Work on sex offender registration changes.
- Attend Arizona Town Hall.
- Continue to work to change offense categories and sentences.
- Fight the stigma of "criminal" re-introduction in order to aid the cause of rehabilitation instead of adding fear in into the general public.
- Remain committed to educating my community to provide solutions.

- Work on shortening the probation conditions. Instead of twenty-two, try to have less than ten statewide standard probation conditions.
- Teach the skills I use in work to former criminals, helping them have something to use in job interviews and networking.
- Vote.
- Understand the sentencing laws we have now and how we can change them; help with re-entry programs in the prisons; help with community support—jobs, housing, and the felons.
- Commit to making sexual offenders a part of the judicial reform conversation.
- Continue to educate the general population about the true meaning of sexual offenses and promote elimination of mandatory sentences.
- Attend the statewide town hall. Speak with friends about the experience.
- Follow all bills affecting criminal justice going through legislature and contact legislators.
- Continue to speak-up for and educate others of the need for a Restorative Justice System. I am a model of a productive restored inmate and a kind, loving community member.
- Meet with our legislatures to encourage them to enact rational legislation to reduce crime and protect the public while lessening the prison population and sharing the constitutional rights of all Arizonians.
- Specific changes we'd like to make this legislature include modernizing ARS 13-923, 13-3821, and 13-3826 all of which provide some relief of a plural offence.

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