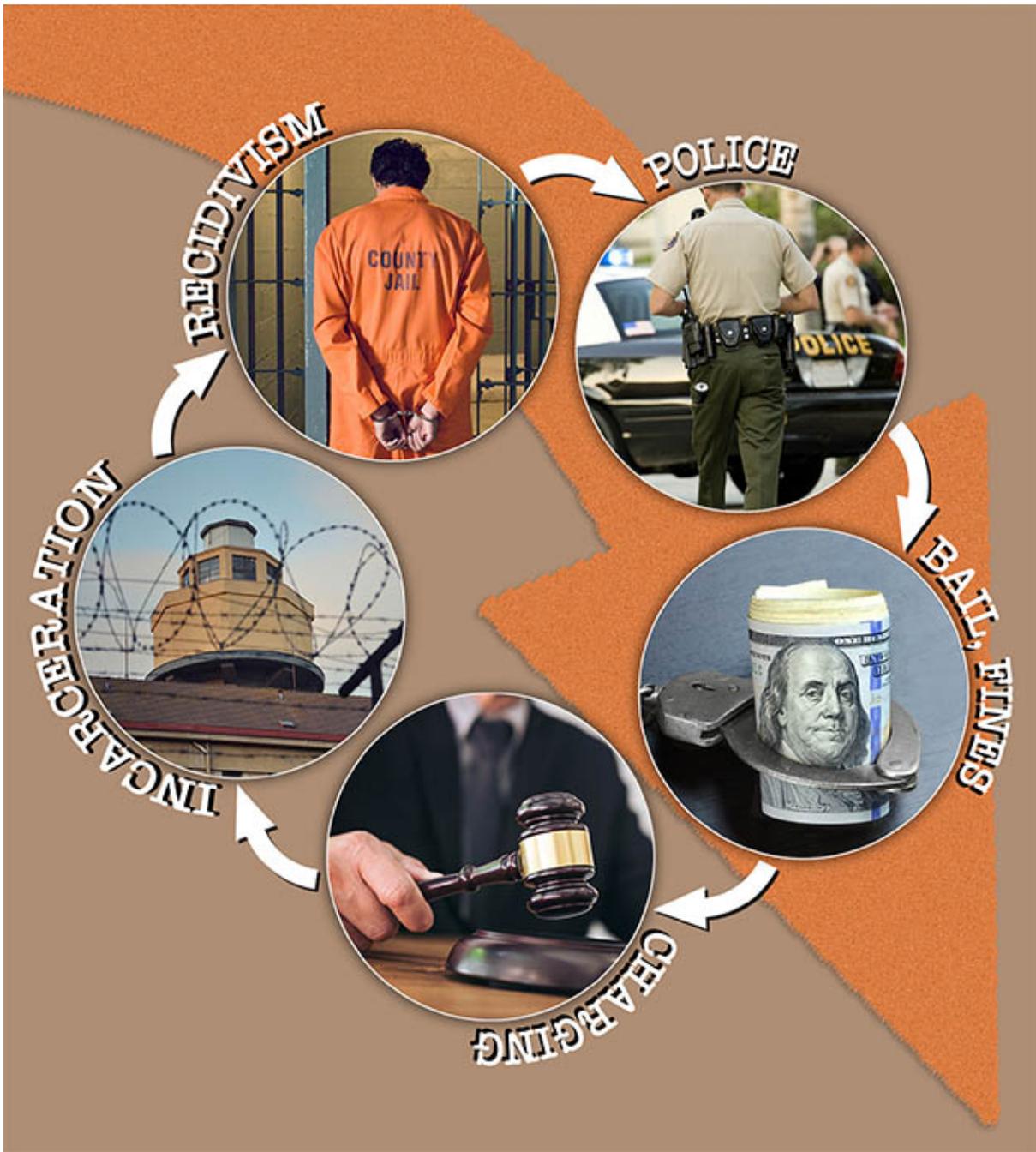


“Criminal Justice in Arizona”

Sierra Vista Community Town Hall Report

Sierra Vista, AZ – October 4, 2018



CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN ARIZONA

Sierra Vista Community Town Hall Report

October 4, 2018 – Cochise College Sierra Vista Campus

Participants of the October 2018 Sierra Vista 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

The principal goals for Arizona's criminal justice system should be to provide proportional punishment that is met with effective rehabilitative social services addressing underlying problems. The services should include counseling, education, psychological, mental health, self-esteem, mentoring, opportunities to volunteer and interaction with the community. The focus should include creating opportunities for work coming out of prison, such as incentives for businesses and safe environments that reduce the stigma around felonies. To increase the return on investment, judges should be given discretion in sentencing and support deferment into treatment for those who can be rehabilitated. The system should ensure that all crimes are reported and investigated, providing safety from all crimes. We must evaluate disparities in sentencing based on racial or social status and prior convictions. The most important goals are rehabilitation and safety and security for everyone involved.

PRIOR TO INCARCERATION

Improvements to Arizona's criminal justice system prior to incarceration should include meaningful pre-trial services that provide access to bus passes, text reminders, housing and counseling. There should be treatment way stations that include diversion programs that front load treatment for mental health and rehabilitation, and that address learning disabilities.

We need to provide flexibility and training that foster public officer accountability through internal means and citizen review boards. We also need to:

1. Make use of resources other than jail such as mental health care, rehabilitation, diversion programs and drug courts;
2. Remove minimum sentences and increase the ability of judges to offset prosecution over charging;
3. Increase support of indigent defense and assure that fines and fees are proportional to income and do not result in being stuck in the system; and
4. Reinvest money from private prisons into education and law enforcement.

We are all responsible for what we want in our communities; it takes a village. We should foster and support investments in education that create champions not criminals.

AFTER INCARCERATION

Improvements to Arizona's criminal justice system after incarceration should include recognizing that getting out of prison is like getting out of the military. We should issue state IDs while incarcerated. We should allow and create opportunities to graduate and decompress in prison while implementing evidence-based correction practices. We should ban the felony box and review collateral consequences that impact job opportunities. We must bridge the gaps between the prison and the community while considering closing private prisons. We should pay for jobs that are performed while incarcerated and establish savings for use once released. We should use services performed as a means of restitution while considering the removal of probation fees and increase fine forgiveness. We must incentivize

employers to work with the Department of Corrections. We should recognize the role of the faith community, community advocates, organizations and families in developing the life skills of our returning citizens. We must provide mental health, health, rehab, peer mentoring and legal services. We must consider if prison is the only way.

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 Sierra Vista Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Have conversations with people I disagree with instead of disregarding them.
- Reach out to programs that are assisting people in all stages of the criminal justice process, as well as those who have mental illness.
- Advocate for the rights of returning citizens.
- Be more aware of struggles that someone entering back into society after being incarcerated have to go through.
- Research local volunteer opportunities for dealing with offender families during incarceration and re-entry.
- Continue to hire ex-cons when possible.
- Support political candidates who will implement innovative measures to help rehabilitate inmates, focus more on rehab rather than punishment, redirect private prison money to education and rehab, and reduce prison population.
- Be more informed and engaged in the community. Also talk to more people and the criminal justice system and what we can do to help.
- Use the terminology “citizens returning to the community.”
- Educate my child to get as far as he can in his education, teach him tolerance, and to reach out to those around him.
- Be more sensitive to those incarcerated by checking on family members and their children.
- Make donations and volunteer time for re-entry program and the like venues.
- Work on a ministry program to encourage folks toward stability.
- Create an entrepreneur program to help ideas become reality for those getting out of prison.
- Examine the police academy curriculum for ethics and mental first aid.
- Converse the benefits of plea bargains vs costs and risks of jury trial and the benefits of prosecutorial discretion.
- Work on developing a volunteer program to address transportation needs in rural communities.
- Offer free legal services for restoration of voting rights for Cochise County residents.
- Help to educate people on becoming homeowners.

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