



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Justice Summit Explores Ideas for Smarter, Affordable Public Safety Measures as Poll Shows Strong Support**

**ORLANDO, Fla.** – The chairmen of several key legislative committees today discussed Smart Justice concepts for Florida’s criminal justice system, as a new public opinion poll revealed that more than three-quarters of Floridians believe a person can support such initiatives and still be considered “tough on crime.” The developments came at the conclusion of Justice Summit 2012, a gathering of experts committed to reforms designed to enhance public safety while saving tax dollars and reducing offender recidivism.

The independent poll, conducted by Fabrizio McLaughlin & Associates, found that 73 percent of the public favors Smart Justice laws that would reduce the number of non-violent criminals in Florida prisons, a change that would save substantial tax dollars while still protecting the public from the worst criminals. More than four in five respondents favor cost-effective treatment programs to prepare non-violent criminals for their re-entry to society, greatly improving their chances of living law-abiding lives after their release.

At a press conference following adjournment of the three-day Justice Summit, a trio of key legislators – Sen. Greg Evers, chairman of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee; Rep. Dennis Baxley, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee; and Sen. Rob Bradley, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal & Civil Justice – said the initiatives discussed at the Summit provide a solid foundation for legislation to be considered in the upcoming legislative session.

“Scarce state revenues demand more effective solutions. With the support of law enforcement and other partners in the criminal justice system, we can produce fewer crime victims and reduce recidivism through a smarter approach for non-violent criminals,” said Barney Bishop, vice president of the Florida Smart Justice Alliance. “This Summit demonstrated that criminal justice reforms in Texas, Georgia and other states have the potential to make Florida safer in the future without becoming soft on crime. Smart Justice is just that: targeted dollars spent in a smarter way to achieve better outcomes.”

The Justice Summit brought together more than 200 experts, from policy makers and elected officials to law enforcement and service providers, with a goal of furthering Florida's efforts to move toward a smarter, more affordable approach to criminal justice issues. Summit participants explored reforms from other states, with any eye toward pushing criminal justice reforms in Florida through evidence-based practices that will lead to a safer state. The public opinion poll findings were analyzed by Marian Johnson, one of Florida’s foremost political strategists in her role as senior vice president of political strategy for the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

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“The people of Florida clearly recognize that our state needs a different approach to criminal justice, one that’s based on the belief that non-violent offenders should receive treatment to address their underlying issues so harsher punishment can be reserved for more serious criminals,” Johnson said.

Among the poll’s findings:

- 78 percent believe a person can support Smart Justice initiatives and still be considered “tough on crime”
- 81 percent favor cost-effective treatment programs to prepare non-violent criminals to re-enter society
- 89 percent favor laws to establish supervised work release where the earnings would pay back victims, pay court costs or pay child support
- 73 percent favor sentencing laws that reduce the number of non-violent criminals in Florida prisons, saving substantial tax dollars
- 70 percent are more likely to support reforms when they are told that almost one-third of those released under current laws end up back in prison, but recidivism is substantially lower in states that have already implemented these programs
- 60 percent reject the notion that the number of crimes will go up if the threat of prison is removed for non-violent criminals

A detailed breakdown of poll questions and responses is attached.

Coming three years after Florida’s first such gathering, Justice Summit 2012 was hosted by the [Florida Smart Justice Alliance](#), a coalition of organizations committed to changes in Florida’s criminal justice and corrections system. The Alliance’s goal is to advance reforms that will make Florida’s communities safer, save taxpayer money and hold offenders accountable while providing the tools for them to live law-abiding lives.

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**FABRIZIO, McLAUGHLIN & ASSOCIATES  
FLORIDA STATEWIDE SURVEY**

**TOPLINE**

SAMPLE SIZE: 800 Registered Voters (680 Land Line, 120 Cell)

FIELD DATES: December 3-4, 2012

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Good evening. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling from First Media Services, a national public opinion firm. This evening we're conducting a short public opinion survey and we'd like to get your input. We are not trying to sell anything and your answers will remain confidential.

1. Which of the following issues facing Florida is the most important to you

- 35 Creating jobs and improving the State's economy
- 17 Improving education
- 7 Eliminating corruption and restoring honesty to State government
- 7 Improving the quality and coverage of health care
- 7 Balancing the State Budget
- 4 Fighting illegal immigration
- 4 Promoting traditional family values
- 4 Lowering taxes
- 3 Reducing wasteful state spending
- 3 Protecting the environment
- 2 Reforming welfare
- 2 Fighting crime and drugs
- 4 Don't Know/Refused

Now I'm going to read you several proposals that are being considered by the Florida Legislature regarding Florida's criminal justice system. When I read you these proposals they will be referring to a specific group of non-violent criminals. Whenever I talk about non-violent criminals, I am referring specifically to criminals who were arrested for drug abuse or mental health issues or non-violent criminals who are military veterans. There was no gun or weapon used when they committed the crime and the crime was more of a property crime and not a crime committed against another person. After I read you each of the proposals, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that specific proposal. And just as a reminder, when I refer to non-violent criminals, I am specifically referring to criminals who were arrested for drug abuse or mental health issues or non-violent criminals who are military veterans.

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		<b>Total Favor</b>	<b>Total Oppose</b>	Strongly Favor	Smwht Favor	Smwht Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Need More Info	DK/Ref
2.	Reforming Florida law to allow for implementing supervised work release programs for non-violent criminals with the earnings from their work used to pay back victims, pay back court costs and pay child support to their children.	<b>89</b>	<b>8</b>	63	26	4	4	1	2
3.	Reforming Florida laws that currently require that non-violent criminals must be sent to prison so that fewer have to serve time in prison and use the savings to taxpayers to instead create a stronger probation system.	<b>65</b>	<b>28</b>	33	32	12	15	2	6
4.	Changing Florida law to use cost-effective programs such as community supervision, mandatory drug testing and treatment programs for people convicted of non-violent crimes while they are in prison or getting ready to reenter society.	<b>81</b>	<b>14</b>	47	34	7	7	1	3

5. If a candidate for the Florida State Legislature supported these reform laws to Florida's criminal justice system, would that make you MORE or LESS likely to vote for that candidate? If it would not affect your vote, just say so.

**47 Total More Likely**  
**10 Total Less Likely**  
19 Much More Likely  
28 Somewhat More Likely  
5 Somewhat Less Likely  
5 Much Less Likely  
38 No Impact  
5 DK/Refused

6. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement.

"A person who is 'tough on crime' can support cost-effective programs for people convicted of non-violent crimes, such as community supervision, mandatory drug testing and treatment programs that reduce the likelihood the offender would commit a new crime, and also save Florida taxpayers significant dollars."

- 78** Total Agree
- 16** Total Disagree
- 40** Strongly Agree
- 37 Somewhat Agree
  
- 10 Somewhat Disagree
- 7 Strongly Disagree
- 6 DK/Refused

Now I'm going to read you some of the arguments that SUPPORTERS of the proposals to reform Florida's criminal justice system are making. And as a reminder, whenever I talk about non-violent criminals, I am referring specifically to criminals who were arrested for drug abuse or mental health issues or non-violent criminals who are military veterans. There was no gun or weapon used when they committed the crime and the crime was more of a property crime and not a crime committed against another person. After hearing each of the arguments I read to you, please tell me whether it would make you MORE likely or LESS likely to support the reforms. If it has no impact on you, just say so.

		<b>Total More Likely</b>	<b>Total Less Likely</b>	Much More Likely	Smwht More Likely	Smwht Less Likely	Much Less Likely	No Impact	DK/Ref
7.	These reforms are necessary because the price tag for running Florida's prisons and corrections department is now costing Florida taxpayers \$2.1 billion dollars a year.	<b>61</b>	<b>19</b>	34	27	11	8	15	5
8.	Cost-effective programs such as community supervision, mandatory drug testing and treatment programs for people convicted of non-violent crimes will not only save taxpayer dollars but reduce the likelihood the person would commit a new crime.	<b>70</b>	<b>17</b>	41	29	8	9	10	3
9.	Prisons play an important role in keeping dangerous criminals away from the public, but they also have the unintended consequence of hardening non-violent criminals, making them a greater risk to people when they get out of prison than they were when they went to prison.	<b>58</b>	<b>23</b>	33	25	13	10	14	5
10.	Placing someone convicted of a non-violent crime in a supervised work release facility would cut the cost to taxpayers in half compared to just sending the person to prison.	<b>74</b>	<b>14</b>	44	30	8	6	9	3

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	<b>Continued....</b>	<b>Total More Likely</b>	<b>Total Less Likely</b>	Much More Likely	Smwht More Likely	Smwht Less Likely	Much Less Likely	No Impact	DK/ Ref
11.	Currently, nearly one-third of those released from Florida prisons end up back in prison. In other states that have implemented these programs, the number of released prisoners who end up back in prison dropped significantly.	<b>70</b>	<b>15</b>	41	29	9	7	10	5
12.	40% of the people sent to Florida prisons serve three years or less and they would be better off in work release or treatment programs than just sending them to prison.	<b>75</b>	<b>16</b>	44	31	7	9	7	2

Now I'm going to read you some of the arguments that OPPONENTS of the proposals to reform Florida's criminal justice system are making. And as a reminder, whenever I talk about non-violent criminals, I am referring specifically to criminals who were arrested for drug abuse or mental health issues or non-violent criminals who are military veterans. There was no gun or weapon used when they committed the crime and the crime was more of a property crime and not a crime committed against another person. After hearing each of the arguments I read to you, please tell me whether it would make you MORE likely or LESS likely to support the reform. If it has no impact on you, just say so.

		<b>Total More Likely</b>	<b>Total Less Likely</b>	Much More Likely	Smwht More Likely	Smwht Less Likely	Much Less Likely	No Impact	DK/ Ref
13.	Prison is supposed to be a deterrent to committing crime and by taking away the threat of people having to go to prison, the number of crimes will increase.	<b>38</b>	<b>34</b>	22	17	19	15	22	6
14.	Prison is a punishment for breaking the law and if you commit the crime you should have to serve the time.	<b>58</b>	<b>23</b>	34	24	14	9	17	3
15.	These new laws will cause thousands of correctional officers to lose their jobs.	<b>26</b>	<b>42</b>	14	12	22	20	27	5
16.	In rural counties, prisons are a major source of employment and these laws will cause prisons in these rural counties to close meaning lots of people will lose their jobs – and it's not just prison guards but it would include cooks, maintenance staff, administrative staff, local suppliers and local businesses.	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>	17	14	21	17	25	6

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Now again, after hearing all of this, I'm going to read you several proposals that are being considered by the Florida Legislature regarding Florida's criminal justice system. When I read you these proposals they will be referring to a specific group of non-violent criminals. Whenever I talk about non-violent criminals, I am referring specifically to criminals who were arrested for drug abuse or mental health issues or non-violent criminals who are military veterans. There was no gun or weapon used when they committed the crime and the crime was more of a property crime and not a crime committed against another person. After I read you each of the proposals, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that specific proposal. And just as a reminder, when I refer to non-violent criminals, I am specifically referring to criminals who were arrested for drug abuse or mental health issues or non-violent criminals who are military veterans.

		<b>Total Favor</b>	<b>Total Oppose</b>	Strongly Favor	Smwht Favor	Smwht Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Need More Info	DK/Ref
17.	Reforming Florida law to allow for implementing supervised work release programs for non-violent criminals with the earnings from their work used to pay back victims, pay back court costs and pay child support to their children.	<b>89</b>	<b>9</b>	63	26	3	5	*	2
18.	Reforming Florida laws that currently require that non-violent criminals must be sent to prison so that fewer have to serve time in prison and use the savings to taxpayers to instead create a stronger probation system.	<b>74</b>	<b>21</b>	40	33	12	10	1	4
19.	Changing Florida law to use cost-effective programs such as community supervision, mandatory drug testing and treatment programs for people convicted of non-violent crimes while they are in prison or getting ready to reenter society.	<b>84</b>	<b>12</b>	51	33	5	6	1	4

20. If a candidate for the Florida State Legislature supported these reform laws to Florida's criminal justice system, would that make you MORE or LESS likely to vote for that candidate? If it would not affect your vote, just say so.

- 49 Total More Likely**
- 9 Total Less Likely**
- 23 Much More Likely
- 26 Somewhat More Likely
- 5 Somewhat Less Likely
- 4 Much Less Likely
- 38 No Impact
- 4 DK/Refused

21. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement.

“A person who is "tough on crime" can support cost-effective programs for people convicted of non-violent crimes, such as community supervision, mandatory drug testing and treatment programs that reduce the likelihood the offender would commit a new crime, and also save Florida taxpayers significant dollars.”

<b>77</b>	<b>Total Agree</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Total Disagree</b>
40	Strongly Agree
37	Somewhat Agree
8	Somewhat Disagree
9	Strongly Disagree
6	DK/Refused

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