



## North Carolina Advocates for Justice Resolution on Mass Incarceration

For over 50 years, it has been the mission of the North Carolina Advocates for Justice (NCAJ) to protect individual rights in North Carolina. NCAJ members represent those injured by the wrongdoing of others, workers fighting for their rights in the workplace, the disabled, those addressing family problems, consumers, those in debt, and those accused of crime. NCAJ accomplishes its mission by advocating for the rights of all citizens in the NC state legislature, developing legal publications and professional development seminars, and administering public outreach initiatives aimed at enhancing public understanding of the U.S. legal system. The organization's Legal Affairs Committee monitors the development of law and serves as a trial attorney advocate to the State Bar.

It is consistent with the mission of NCAJ to acknowledge the issue of mass incarceration, the dire human and economic toll it has taken on North Carolina citizens, and the need for meaningful criminal justice reform. The issue of mass incarceration poses a threat to our democracy and to the rights of citizens both nationally and in North Carolina. With a total of over 6.89 million people in jails, prisons, and under other forms of correctional control, the United States has the highest rates of incarceration in the world. Currently, more than 20 percent of the world's prisoners are housed in the United States, although it is home to only 5 percent of the world's population. While the incarceration rate has more than quadrupled in the past forty years, researchers have not concluded that mass incarceration has made our society safer.

Mass incarceration disproportionately affects racial minorities. While 13% of the US population is African-American, the national prison population is 40% African-American. In North Carolina, African-Americans make up 22% of the general population and 57% of the prison population.

Mass incarceration has devastating effects on individuals, families, and society. Expansion of the criminal justice system has created a large population of people who have limited access to employment, programs that might promote success, public benefits, and civic participation such as voting and jury service. Studies show that incarceration of a father has been linked to higher rates of homelessness in families and poor developmental outcomes in children. Society suffers when citizens are denied the right to vote. The way in which prisoners are counted in the U.S. census creates inequities in political representation in legislative bodies. Further, mass incarceration has consumed large portions of the governments' budgets, leaving inadequate funds for education, health care, police, and other public purposes.

NCAJ and its members are committed to dismantling mass incarceration in North Carolina and hereby resolve to make the issue a priority and to identify and engage in reform efforts.