



Hearing on California Criminal Justice Reform: Potential Lessons for the Nation in California

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Drs. Magnus Lofstrom and Steve Raphael conducted a study of statewide crime trends pre- and post-Realignment (Lofstrom and Raphael 2016). They found that Realignment had no impact on violent crime and only a very modest impact on property crime, and only for crime of auto-theft (see accompanying paper). Lofstrom and Raphael (2016) also conducted a cost benefit analysis. They found that 1 year served in prison instead of atlarge as a result of Realignment prevents 1.2 auto-thefts a year and saves roughly \$12,000 in crime-related costs, as well as harm to victims and their families. On other hand, keeping an individual behind bars for a year costs California nearly \$52,000 (in 2013 dollars). They 3 ultimately conclude that, at the statewide level, the prison-crime effects are small and that the criminogenic consequences of Realignment have been modest.

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The findings from these studies have implications well beyond Realignment and Prop 47, and California. The steps taken by the state to reform its criminal justice system are being closely watched by other states also confronting similar fiscal and legal challenges related to overcrowding. These states are asking whether the large-scale prison downsizing in California will compromise public safety or whether they can look to reforms such as Realignment and 6 Prop 47 as possible solutions to replicate in their own states. Although speculation abounds, rigorous, high-quality scientific research is necessary to answer this question. Although additional studies are welcome, the findings thus far suggest that these reforms are not associated with meaningful increases in crime. As the nation debates prison downsizing, clearly the experience of California must be front and center.

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