

Does Missouri Need More “Truth in Sentencing”?

Does Truth in Sentencing Address Crime?

NO.

- Truth in Sentencing requires longer prison terms, yet research shows longer stays do not reduce recidivism or improve public safety. Extended incarceration can even increase reoffending by weakening family ties, limiting employment prospects, and restricting access to rehabilitation.
- Truth in Sentencing shifts resources toward incarceration rather than prevention. Every additional year served costs taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars that could otherwise fund drug treatment, mental health services, victim services, and community-based supervision strategies that are proven to reduce crime.

Is Crime Rising in Missouri?

NO.

- **From 2015-2024, Missouri’s total crime rate decreased 28%**, with the state experiencing a 7% decrease in violent crime and a 32% decrease in property crime.
- During this time period, Missouri’s **violent crime rate decreased at a greater rate than seven nearby states.**
 - From 2015-2024, Kansas (11%), Arkansas (9%), and Minnesota (6%) saw increases in their violent crime rates, while North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kentucky, and South Dakota saw modest decreases (between 1% and 6%).

Can Taxpayers Afford Expanded Truth in Sentencing

NO.

- Corrections spending is growing even without expanded sentencing mandates. Despite Missouri’s diminishing revenue, DOC funding still increased by \$72 million from FY25 to FY26.
- Missouri faces competing fiscal obligations, including Medicaid growth, K-12 funding requirements, infrastructure backlogs, and statewide workforce shortages – all of which draw from the same General Revenue pool that funds Corrections.

As prison populations grow, resources must shift toward staffing, housing, and medical costs. Education programs, substance use treatment, mental health services, and reentry support – all proven to reduce recidivism – risk being crowded out by the rising cost of incarceration.

Do Missourians Support These Policies?

NO.

October 2025 polling highlighted the public’s interest in rehabilitative efforts over carceral measures.

- **67%** of Missourians indicated support for legislative efforts that would **increase the amount of time that people can earn off their prison sentence** for following rules and participating in rehabilitation and education programs.
- Nearly **80%** of voters supported adopting good/earned time credit policies similar to the FIRST STEP Act system.
- 27% believed that if there was more funding available to reduce crime in communities, the money should go to drug and mental health treatment, while **only 4% believed that it should go to jails and prisons.**

Sources:

FBI Crime Data Explorer

State of Missouri FY2026 Executive Budget, HB 9

Missouri State Auditor Report No. 2025-101

Up ONE Insights Missouri Statewide Survey, October 7 -11, 2025