

# MYTH VS. TRUTH: MISSOURI'S PRISONS

## IT IS A MYTH

that our prisons are full of first-time, non-violent offenders. The reality is that our state penitentiaries lock up the sort of violent and career criminals who need to be behind bars.

**THE TRUTH IS:**  
**23,509 of 23,826**

prisoners<sup>1</sup> in Missouri are exactly the people we have prisons for: Criminals guilty of violent or sex crimes, repeat felony offenders, or lawbreakers who wasted their chance on probation or parole.

**1%**

The percentage of inmates in Missouri's prisons who are first-time, nonviolent felony offenders sentenced to a prison term.

So-called "sentencing reform" would simply return dangerous and repeat offenders to our streets, making our communities **more dangerous.**

## Prosecutors have led the way on alternatives to prison.

Prosecutors helped write the new criminal code that reduced penalties for many nonviolent felonies. Since then, Missouri's prison population has decreased over 25%, from 32,000 inmates to fewer than 24,000. Now, we should invest in programs that keep people from winding up in prison in the first place:

### Diversion programs

that replace jail time with things like community service, drug and alcohol testing, counseling, and supervision.

### Drug, DWI, Mental Health, Veterans and other courts

that get offenders needed treatment instead of incarceration.

### Swift, certain, short jail stays

for offenders who violate the terms of their probation.

### Reentry programs

that help prisoners transition back into the community after release.

## UNMASK THE MYTH

that prisons are full of people who don't belong there, a falsehood that endangers public safety.

Let's concentrate on **real solutions** to our crime problems.

A message from the  
**Missouri Association  
of Prosecuting Attorneys.**



# THE MYTH

Our prisons are full of first-time, nonviolent drug offenders.

VS

# THE TRUTH

**99%** of inmates are violent or sex offenders, career criminals, or lawbreakers who failed while on probation or parole.

The right people are behind bars.

