

NORA and Communities of Color



The Nonviolent Offender Rehabilitation Act of 2008

California's prison overcrowding has reached crisis levels. Over 170,000 people are crammed in facilities designed for 100,000 at a cost of \$10 billion per year. The state's recidivism rate is 70%, twice the national average. This broken system threatens the well-being of all Californians, and, inequitably, people and communities of color.

African Americans comprise just 6% of California's population, but roughly 20% of drug arrests, 30% of all incarcerated people in the state's prisons, and 25% of people on parole supervision. Latinos comprise one-third of California's population, but nearly 40% of the prison population and 40% of parolees. In at least four California counties, African Americans are incarcerated for drug offenses at 25 times the rate of whites.

The Nonviolent Offender Rehabilitation Act (NORA) – Proposition 5 on the November state ballot – will transform the criminal justice system in California, expanding access to drug treatment and rehabilitation, and saving taxpayers at least \$2.5 billion in prison-construction costs over several years. Although not solely designed to close the racial disparity in drug sentencing, incarceration, and access to treatment, Prop. 5 will help those communities that have been disproportionately harmed by California's broken prison system.

- **Prop. 5 will reduce the disproportionate progression of young people of color from arrest to incarceration.** Prop. 5 will create services to help young people with drug problems access treatment even before a drug arrest.
- **Prop. 5 will reduce discrimination in sentencing by mandating that courts use universal and objective criteria** – not prosecutorial discretion – to place nonviolent, low-level drug offenders into community-based treatment instead of jail or prison.
- **Prop. 5 will expand culturally appropriate drug treatment in the community.** Prop. 5 will vastly expand funding for treatment services and mandate the provision of treatment that is individualized and linguistically, culturally and geographically appropriate. The measure will also fund wraparound assistance, including housing assistance and childcare.
- **Prop. 5 will expand rehabilitation and support community re-entry.** Prop. 5 will expand rehabilitation, allowing more people to return to healthy and productive lives in the community. Further, some people could have their drug offenses expunged after completing treatment, reducing the life-long discrimination in housing and employment associated with a criminal record.
- **Prop. 5 will stop the unnecessary re-incarceration of nonviolent offenders for nothing more than a “technical violation” of parole**, such as missing a meeting or struggling with a drug problem. Instead, Prop. 5 will expand community-based services for nonviolent parolees while providing limited local sanctions for minor violations.

Drug Policy
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