

20 Questions for Delaware General Assembly Candidates

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CANDIDATE DISTRICT: STATE REP. DISTRICT 17

The Coalition for Smart Justice is committed to cutting the number of prisoners in Delaware in half and eliminating racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Elected officials are essential to achieving those goals. We have launched a campaign to communicate with voters about candidates' positions on issues related to criminal justice reform. This questionnaire is the focus of that effort. If you choose not to respond, we will indicate that in our public communications.

Scale Questions

1. Delaware sends too many people to prison with sentences that are too long.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. Communities of color are over-policed and underserved.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. Prison time is an effective deterrent to crime. Longer sentences mean less crime.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. It is important to invest more state resources into diversion programs such as drug treatment and community supervision so that fewer people go to prison.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. It is important to invest more state resources into services that will assist people coming out of prison to find a job and be successful as they re-enter the community.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. When an especially egregious crime happens in Delaware, it is important to pass a law to make sentences harsher.
- Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
7. The state should retain the power to seize people's assets under current civil asset forfeiture laws even though no crime has been proven.
- Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
8. People of color are treated more harshly by the police and prosecutors than white people.
- Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
9. Probation sentences are too long and there are too many obstacles to meeting the terms of probation.
- Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
10. Delaware should reinstate the death penalty for murder.
- Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
11. Delaware should reinstate the death penalty only for murder of a police officer, prison guard or other first responder.
- Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
12. The state should establish a civilian oversight board that would review incidences such as serious police brutality or when a police officer kills someone while on duty.
- Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
13. Bail reform is important so that a person's ability to access money does not determine who stays in prison awaiting trial and who goes home.
- Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. Juveniles should not be tried as adults no matter what crime they are accused of.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. People with a felony record should be able to have that record expunged by a judge, even for serious crimes, after a period of 5-10 years has elapsed with no further criminal activity.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Case by case basis

Open-Ended Questions

16. African Americans are 22 percent of Delaware's population and 51 percent of our prison population. What should the General Assembly do to reduce the racial disparities at various stages of our criminal process?

We need laws that are specific to holding people accountable for racial profiling. This should include instituting race-sensitive guidelines for charging, bail/release recommendations, plea bargaining and prosecutorial diversion. Also, a research study should be done to identify the contributing factors of disparities at every stage of the criminal process. After this information is gathered, a plan should be implemented involving law enforcement, community members, politicians, etc. All should work together to reach the common goal.

I would like to see law enforcement be required to complete "intense" cultural sensitivity training, race sensitive pre-trial decision-making training and be held accountable for not acting in good faith. It is also important to have law enforcement engage with the community.

17. The average length of stay in prison in Delaware is 50 percent longer than the national average. Will you pledge to advocate for the elimination of all mandatory minimum sentences? Please give a yes or no answer and any explanation you think is necessary. If there are mandatory minimums you support, please identify them specifically.

Yes, I believe that mandatory minimum sentencing should be eliminated. The circumstances of the crime and the characteristics of the individual need to be assessed on a case by case basis.

18. Do you support legislation and appropriation of funds requiring the collection, analysis and publication of statistical data in order to track prosecutorial decisions, evaluate the effectiveness policies and assess racial bias in the criminal justice system? Please give a yes or no answer and any explanation you think is necessary.

Absolutely, this is the only way to create positive change!

19. Other than gun control legislation. how can Delaware fight our gun violence problem? Are there specific proposals that you would offer as a member of the General Assembly to reduce gun violence in the state?

We need to remember that it is not the gun causing the violence but the person behind the gun. We need to get ahead of the issue. We can do this by ensuring that our schools, beginning with elementary, have trained mental health professionals that can identify red flag behaviors and take a holistic approach on intervention. Also, we need to go back to basics within our schools by working with our children to teach social skills, coping skills, and preparation for life. Right now, our youth are being pre-diagnosed, pre-medicated, and expelled from school. If we intervene early, we can save them. When we ignore, these same youth are growing up and getting caught up in gun violence, drugs, and gang activity. This could've been prevented early on. It's time to put some focus on the preventative.

Other than youth preventative, we should put more focus on appropriate rehabilitation within our prisons including discharge planning, then post incarceration, re-entry. We can't keep discharging people from prison and expecting them to figure out how to survive in society on their own after years of incarceration. That is unrealistic. It's time for Delaware to focus on reducing/preventing recidivism by providing the skills and tools needed to successfully reenter into society.

These two things alone will reduce gun violence. It's time to help Delawareans gain a sense of purpose while residing in the state.

20. Do you support diversion for people accused of some violent crimes such as offensive touching and assault in the third degree?

Yes, following thorough assessment of the crime.