

20 Questions for Delaware General Assembly Candidates

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CANDIDATE DISTRICT: STATE REP. DISTRICT 7

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

As the SMART JUSTICE Coalition is well aware, it has been well proven that longer sentences DOES NOT mean less crime. We need to remember the intention of criminal justice is to seek a just response to unjust actions which have been taken, and to build a more just society through deterring future crimes. Modern research is making us increasingly aware that longer sentences does not deter crime, the best way to deter crime is to build a society where people have the opportunities to survive without getting into crime in the first place, and the help needed to get back on their feet and out of the system after they have committed and paid society for a crime.

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

Fundamentally I don't agree that simply increasing sentences will reduce future crimes from being committed. However this question is nuanced because the best legislative response to an especially egregious crime is always going to depend on the situation and the acerbating factors that made the crime especially egregious. I say this to note that there may be appropriate times to make a sentences harder for a specific crime, but that must be tempered with evidence based data to warrant harder sentencing.

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

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?

The General Assembly must do everything it can to dismantle institutionalized racism which has no better example than this inconceivable example of African American incarcerations rates in Delaware being astronomically high. The question still remains, what can we do, and what will I advocate for in the General Assembly. First we have to understand the old adage, "That which is measured, improves." I advocate that we track

and make public the statistics on prosecutorial outcomes by racial and socio-economic populations.

A second but important measure to reform is the bail system. Bail serves a purpose to ensure defendants will appear for trial when there is a risk they may not, however a huge portion of Delaware's prison population are nonviolent and misdemeanor offenders who cannot afford bail. The result is individuals, primarily among disenfranchised populations, accused and not convicted of a crime being kept from working and supporting their families while they are moving through the criminal justice system. This situation compounds the harm brought to a family when a parents or grandparent is accused of a crime and arrested.

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 will pledge to advocate for the elimination of all mandatory minimum sentences. A lot of good effort has gone into re-writing our criminal code in the past, but to work fell short of actually implementing holistic criminal code reform. Starting with removal of the compounding effect of mandatory minimums and tiered charging of crimes, we need to advocate for comprehensive reform.

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.

Yes, as I mentioned in an earlier question I feel it is vital to track and analyze the outcomes of our criminal justice system. Only with reliable information can we make reliable improvements.

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?

Aside from additional gun control legislation we have to fight our gun violence problem at the root. The most haunting gun violence in Delaware is primarily driven by gang

related violence. That means the most effective route we can take to reducing gun violence is youth gang intervention. We have to work in a coordinated effort starting inside the schools to identify who/what/where services are needed, then bringing in appropriate social intervention resources to lift kids out of the draw of gangs and gang violence. This includes investing in youth services such as employment and recreational services.

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

Yes, I do. I support diversion for any crime where diversion has proven to be an effective response at reducing recidivism for the same crime in the future.