**SC Sentencing Reform Reduces Numbers in Prison, Increases Probationers**

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With the South Carolina corrections department running a $27 million deficit, the state projected its prison population would swell by 3,200 inmates by 2014, costing taxpayers $175 million to make room for those inmates and $66 million a year to take care of them. Instead, reports The State in Columbia, the number of inmates imprisoned has dropped by more than 2,700, and the Corrections Department has closed two prisons. Taxpayers saved $3 million in 2012 alone.

The reason, officials say, is a sweeping 2010 bill that radically changed how South Carolina treats its criminals. Written by a Democratic state senator and signed by a Republican governor, the law strengthened penalties for violent crimes while offering alternative sentences for nonviolent crimes. Passage of the law put South Carolina "at the forefront of states advancing research-driven criminal justice polices," said to the Pew Center on the States. "You see a lot of legislation that's passed that seems to be tough on crime," said Sen. Gerald Malloy, author of the sentencing reform. "We had to get smart on crime." One department's budget blessing is another agency's fiscal burden. While the prison population is falling, the number of South Carolinians on probation is soaring. Agents are supervising 1,409 more offenders than they were two years ago. Each probation agent supervises an average of 97 cases, far above the national average of 50 cases.

[The State (SC)](https://webmail.east.cox.net/do/redirect?url=http%253A%252F%252Fr20.rs6.net%252Ftn.jsp%253Fe%253D001EP9KjXPNexnslLpQM5dw5FPX152GeqBCsvEK26QF1QgQAilIoaATIYXzcjU-gNtcFDxaOyhxWqKY3O8ryvHDdkjj5Jw_TwCXLTXR9S6hcZpMPPXpgZdaiKfEl5DWsspinLVU01EYQAifnragVns0hsBRkco3BmVOqiqaeyeAa3iqinRVEeYptP7RNV-ZFGW4zc9TEgI4wrY%253D)