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## **BILL SUMMARY: Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015**

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The ill-conceived “War on Drugs” that began more than 30 years ago has resulted in a system that is unjustly biased. From arrest to release, African Americans, Latinos, and low-income individuals are disproportionately over-represented throughout the system. Today, due in large part to so-called “tough on crime” policies and mandatory minimum sentences, the United States incarcerates more people and a higher percentage of its population than any other country in the world.

On October 1, 2015, a bipartisan group of senators introduced S. 2123, the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015, a major criminal justice reform package aimed at reducing some mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug offenders and curbing recidivism. It is the most significant federal legislative initiative on criminal justice reform since the passage of the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010, which the new bill would make retroactive.

The bill would also:

**Reform Enhanced Mandatory Minimums for People with Prior Drug Convictions:** The bill reduces enhanced penalties that apply to people with prior drug convictions and eliminates the “three-strikes” mandatory life provision. These reductions are retroactive. In addition, the reduced enhanced penalties will only apply to people with prior convictions for serious violent and serious drug felonies.

**Broaden the Existing “Safety Valve” and Create a Second Safety Valve:** The bill expands exceptions to the application of mandatory minimums (called the “safety valve”) to people with more extensive criminal histories. People with prior felonies and violent or drug trafficking offenses are excluded from these exceptions, unless a court finds those prior offenses substantially overstate the defendant’s criminal history and danger of recidivism. The bill also creates a second safety valve that gives judges discretion to sentence certain people with low-level offenses below the 10-year mandatory minimum. People convicted of serious violent and serious drug felonies cannot benefit from this safety valve.

**Reform Enhanced Mandatory Minimums and Sentences for Firearm Offenses:** The bill expands the reach of the enhanced mandatory minimum for violent firearm offenders to those with prior federal or state firearm offenses, but reduces that mandatory minimum to provide courts with greater flexibility in sentencing. The bill also raises the statutory maximum for unlawful possession of firearms but lowers the enhanced mandatory minimum for people with prior convictions.

**Create New Mandatory Minimums for Interstate Domestic Violence and Certain Export Control Violations:** The bill adds new mandatory minimum sentences for certain crimes involving interstate domestic violence and creates a new mandatory minimum for providing weapons and other defense materials to prohibited countries and terrorists.

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**Provide Mechanisms for Prison Reform:** The bill requires the Department of Justice to conduct risk assessments to classify all federal inmates and to use the results to assign inmates to appropriate recidivism reduction programs, including work and education programs, drug rehabilitation, job training, and religious studies. Eligible prisoners who successfully complete these programs can earn early release and may spend the final portion (up to 25 percent) of their remaining sentence in home confinement or a halfway house. The bill also expands compassionate release of certain older incarcerated people.

**Address Treatment of Youth in the Federal System.** The bill significantly limits solitary confinement of juveniles in federal custody, eliminates life without parole for juveniles, and permits any person with a life sentence whose offense was committed when they were juvenile and has served 20 years to petition for early release. The bill also permits people tried as juveniles in federal court who've committed nonviolent offenses in certain circumstances to have their records sealed or expunged.

**Tell your senator to vote for the  
Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015 (S. 2123)!**