



LOUISIANANS FOR  
PRISON ALTERNATIVES

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**Louisianans for Prison Alternatives Rally for Criminal Justice Reform**

BATON ROUGE – On the heels of a public opinion poll showing broad bipartisan support for Louisiana’s 2017 Justice Reinvestment Package, hundreds of criminal justice advocates descended on the Capitol today for Louisianaans for Prison Alternatives’ (LPA) lobby day, culminating in an outdoor rally on the capitol steps.

LPA is fighting to protect and build on Louisiana’s [historic criminal justice package](#), which has reduced the state’s prison population while saving taxpayer money and reinvesting those dollars into initiatives that reduce crime. A recent LSU survey showed that 70 percent of Louisianans now support the justice reinvestment package, up 9 percentage points from 2018.

This year advocates are pushing for sensible, data-driven reforms that will build on this progress. Specifically, [House Bill 518](#), which is scheduled to be heard Tuesday in the House Administration of Criminal Justice Committee, would remove nonviolent offenses from the state’s Habitual Offender Statute, helping to prevent people from being condemned to extreme prison sentences for minor offenses. The coalition is also continuing to press to [reform Louisiana’s parole system](#) to create reasonable opportunities for people serving long sentences to apply for parole.

Members of LPA were joined by state representatives Randal Gaines, Royce Duplessis, and Pat Smith.

“We need to put in place policies that give hope to our people,” said **Rep. Randal Gaines**, who is sponsoring HB 518. “We have to address the problems, not the consequences.”

“Louisiana’s historic criminal justice reform package is making our communities stronger and safer – but more work must be done to reduce our bloated prison population and reverse the tide of mass incarceration,” said **Alanah Odoms Hebert, ACLU of Louisiana executive director**. “By abolishing Jim Crow juries in November, Louisiana spoke loud and clear that they want their elected officials to prioritize people, not prisons.”

“Thousands of families across Louisiana have someone dealing with the inhumane punishments and senseless discriminations based on criminal convictions,” said **Kiana Calloway, an organizer for Voice of the Experienced**. “We are residents of every parish, and voters in every district, who only last year ended the non-unanimous jury crafted under Jim Crow. We need our Legislature to continue embracing the value of building us up rather than tearing us down.”

“In 2017, we helped pass 10 bills that lowered Louisiana's incarceration rate,” said **John Burkhart, field director for the SPLC Action Fund**. “We returned last year in 2018 to defend what we passed the year before, and we successfully defeated several efforts to roll back justice reinvestment. And this year we're back. We are back to defend what we've done. We're back to roll it even further up the hill. We have a lot of fights behind us, and we have a lot more in front of us.”

[LPA](#) is a statewide coalition that brings together a diverse group of stakeholders – from crime survivors to formerly incarcerated people to community advocates – working toward reducing Louisiana’s prison population, improving public safety and dramatically lowering the tax burden of the state’s criminal justice system.

Attached is a photo of the event from Louisianans for Prison Alternatives. If you need additional photos, please contact Elizabeth Johnson at [elizabeth.johnson@splcenter.org](mailto:elizabeth.johnson@splcenter.org).

You can watch the rally on Louisianans for Prison Alternatives’ Facebook page [here](#).

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