



[Home](#) | [Newsroom](#)

03.08.17

## Peters, Graham, Cornyn Reintroduce National Criminal Justice Commission Act

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – U.S. Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and John Cornyn (R-TX) today reintroduced the bipartisan *National Criminal Justice Commission Act*, legislation that would create a National Criminal Justice Commission to review the criminal justice system from top to bottom and propose reforms to address the most pressing issues facing the nation’s criminal justice system.

“Our criminal justice system is built on the pillars of fairness and equality, but too many Americans see growing challenges in our justice system ranging from overburdened courts and unsustainable incarceration costs to strained relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve,” **said Senator Peters**. “Creating the National Criminal Justice Commission is a critical step to help reduce crime, improve public safety and promote more equitable criminal justice practices. I’m proud to join Senators Graham and Cornyn to reintroduce this bipartisan bill that will identify much-needed solutions that will help strengthen our criminal justice system for every American at every level.”

“This is a long overdue measure,” **said Senator Graham**. “The men and women representing law enforcement understand the need for this legislation, and I appreciate them pushing Congress to move forward on this important issue. I think the nation will be better off with this essential top-to-bottom review of the most pressing issues facing our nation’s criminal justice system.”

“Strengthening the relationship between law enforcement and our communities begins with open dialogue, and through an objective review system we can modernize and reform our criminal justice system,” **Senator Cornyn said**. “I’m proud to again join my colleagues on this bipartisan effort to empower both the men and women who risk their lives, and the communities they serve.”

The legislation would create a 14-member, bipartisan National Criminal Justice Commission charged with completing an 18-month, comprehensive review of the national criminal justice system, including federal, state, local and tribal criminal justice systems, and issuing recommendations for changes in oversight, policies, practices and laws to reduce crime, increase public safety and promote confidence in the criminal justice system.

The Commission would be made up of Presidential and Congressional appointees, including experts on law enforcement, criminal justice, victims’ rights, civil liberties and social services. In 2015, Peters joined Graham and Cornyn in introducing similar legislation to establish a National Criminal Justice Commission.

The transparent and bipartisan National Criminal Justice Commission would also provide a better understanding of community relationships with law enforcement and the administration of justice through our court system, and identify effective policies to address a broad range of issues in the criminal justice system including crime reduction, incarceration and prisoner reentry.

The last comprehensive review of the criminal justice system was conducted in 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson created the Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. The 1965 Commission's report offered over 200 recommendations that have shaped the current criminal justice system, including the creation of the 9-1-1 system establishment of research organizations like the Bureau of Justice Statistics and improved training and professionalization for law enforcement.

Joining Peters, Graham and Cornyn are original cosponsors: Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Bill Nelson (D-FL), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Bob Casey (D-PA), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), Susan Collins (R-ME), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Mark Warner (D-VA), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Kamala Harris (D-CA) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA).

The National Criminal Justice Commission Act is supported by a broad coalition of criminal justice organizations, including law enforcement, crime victims and criminal justice reform advocates.

*Endorsements for the National Criminal Justice Commission Act include:*

**Wade Henderson, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights:**

"It's clear that our justice system is in dire need of reform and the National Criminal Justice Commission Act would provide the first comprehensive review in over fifty years and serve to validate many of the current reform efforts across the country. When our justice system disproportionately impacts people of color that certainly warrants review and recommendations for improvements. If lawmakers are serious about ensuring our justice system serves the public, increases our collective safety, and is cost-effective, they should support this commonsense measure."

**Chuck Canterbury, National President, Fraternal Order of Police said:**

"The FOP and the rest of the law enforcement committee have been calling for the establishment of a commission to examine and review all facets of our nation's criminal justice systems. We're proud to support legislation introduced by Senators Peters, Graham and Cornyn to do just that. The commission will undertake a comprehensive analysis of the administration of justice in our nation today and make recommendations which have the unanimous support of the commission. The goal here is to improve not only policing in the U.S., but our nation's criminal justice system as a whole."

**Hilary Shelton, Director, NAACP Washington Bureau and Senior Vice President for Policy and Advocacy said:**

"There are serious challenges at every stage of our criminal justice system that undermine the basic tenets of justice, fairness and equality. Civil rights organizations and law enforcement groups for years have been calling for a thorough and exhaustive review of our entire criminal justice system, and too many events over the past few years have made it even more abundantly clear that we need comprehensive criminal justice reform. I applaud Senators Peters, Graham and Cornyn for their bipartisan leadership on this effort and I look forward to working with them and all other seriously concerned individuals and groups to make these crucial changes that will help strengthen the

perception of integrity by all Americans, save lives, prevent crime and help law enforcement keep our communities even safer.”

**Chief Donald W. De Lucca, President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) said:**

“I commend Senators Peters, Cornyn, and Graham for introducing this important legislation and I would also like to thank the other Senators who co-sponsored this bill. The IACP has long called for the creation of a National Commission on Criminal Justice to develop across-the-board improvements to the criminal justice system, in order to address current challenges and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire criminal justice community. The National Criminal Justice Commission Act will do just that. It is imperative that we explore all aspects of the criminal justice system and determine what needs to be revamped and develop a strong set of recommendation to address the broad range of new and emerging challenges that confront not only law enforcement but other criminal justice providers.”

**Marc H. Morial, President and CEO, National Urban League said:**

“We strongly support a comprehensive and overdue review of all areas of the criminal justice system to ensure that fairness and equality are fully integrated at its every stage. That is why the National Urban League applauds bipartisan efforts to create a National Criminal Justice Commission to propose key reforms to reduce crime, violence and recidivism, and improve cost-effectiveness. Through this Commission we also hope to identify solutions aimed at eliminating the school-to-prison pipeline that draw in too many of our youth. We applaud Senators Peters, Graham and Cornyn for their leadership and look forward to working with the Commission.”

**Jonathan F. Thompson, Executive Director and CEO, National Sheriffs’ Association said:**

“Rather than simply denounce the whole system as broken, we must critically examine the role that criminal justice plays in the lives of every day Americans and make necessary proactive investments to improve the system for all of us. The National Sheriffs’ Association applauds Senators Peters, Graham and Cornyn for introducing this bill to establish a National Criminal Justice Commission.”

**Charles Sullivan, President, International CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants) said:**

“A recent study by the highly respected Prison Policy Initiative estimated that as much as \$182 billion is spent every year on incarceration in our criminal justice system. The National Criminal Justice Commission created by this legislation will help identify ways to protect public safety, reduce the prison population and help the people who have paid their debts to society access the resources they need to turn their lives around.”

**Oakland Co MI Sheriff Michael Bouchard, VP Government Affairs for the Major County Sheriffs of America:**

“For years, the Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA) has advocated for the creation of a commission that would review the state of our criminal justice system, seek out areas of weakness and inefficiency and develop solutions that will help provide a strategic plan to combat crime and promote public safety. We thank Senators Peters, Graham and Cornyn and look forward to our continued collaboration as we work towards passage of the *National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2017*.”