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Letters to the Editor
The New Orleans Advocate
1010 Common St.
New Orleans, LA 70112

Dear Editor:

A story published online and in your newspaper last week mentioned that I am opposed to the bi-partisan effort to reform Louisiana's criminal justice system. Neither I nor the Louisiana District Attorneys Association (LDAA) is opposed to improving the criminal laws, as such. In fact, previous revisions made to the Criminal Code and supported by Louisiana's district attorneys have resulted in a 9 percent reduction in incarceration over the past five years.

I and the LDAA are committed to support similar reforms. Of the 10 bills filed as part of Justice Reinvestment, only four of the bills need substantive amendments to protect the public. We believe some of the proposed changes are trying to do too much too soon. Specifically, we oppose the wholesale revision and reclassification of the Criminal Code. The fact is that this is a complex, inter-related matter, which requires further study to protect the integrity of the criminal justice system.

We also oppose the release of criminals, particularly those with a history of violence, when the state's recidivism rate is 42 percent within five years, according to the Department of Corrections. To decrease this revolving door of inmates returning to prison, there needs to be not only re-investment, but pre-investment in probation and rehabilitation services to protect the public.

Finally, I believe that many of the goals that proponents of the legislation would like to see can be accomplished at the local level. What the Covington Police Department is doing with Operation Angel, my office with its Diversion Program, and our Judges with the Specialty Courts do not require changes to our criminal laws. They require initiative and leadership at the local level.

I know our legislators are working hard. They have our support, and I am optimistic that together we will find a resolution that protects the public and makes needed improvements to our criminal justice system.

Sincerely,


Warren Montgomery