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## RESET Louisiana Calls for Thoughtful Decisions in Crime Special Session

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**For Immediate Release**

(Baton Rouge, La.) – As lawmakers start work in a special session called by Gov. Jeff Landry to address crime, RESET Louisiana urges the House and Senate to make decisions based on data and best practices known to reduce violent crime rather than backpedaling on reform.

Protecting citizens is one of the highest priorities of any government. Crime is a significant concern across the state. Louisiana deserves policies that prioritize public safety and ensure the state's limited tax dollars are used effectively.

RESET Louisiana has cautioned against undoing the 2017 criminal justice reforms. Some blame these reforms for the rise in crime following the COVID-19 outbreak. Believing this would require ignoring the fact that crime increased across the country during and after COVID caused widespread social and economic disruptions. Already, violent crime rates are starting to fall in Louisiana and other states as we move further from the pandemic.

More should be done to continue to reduce violent crime. However, reversing course back to incarcerating large numbers of low-risk or nonviolent people carries too hefty a cost for taxpayers in a corrections budget that totals hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Little evidence exists to show that imprisoning criminals with longer sentences reduces crime or recidivism, though it definitely will cost taxpayers more money and put a greater strain on the budget.

The governor and lawmakers should focus prison beds on those who pose a serious threat to public safety and continue to reinvest other corrections dollars into evidence-backed prison alternatives, rehabilitation and reentry programs aimed at helping people return to society and productive jobs.

That's not to suggest all the bills up for consideration in the special session won't have merit. The House and Senate should give serious consideration to proposals supported by data or other states' experiences showing they will improve safety.

As they work to combat crime, lawmakers should consider actions proven to work – including investing dollars in judicial transparency and state crime lab backlogs, as well as job training programs, mental health services and other efforts to smooth reentry for offenders leaving prison. They should also promote broader educational efforts such as reducing school truancy and providing quality early childhood programs that address root causes of crime and improve citizens' long-term trajectory.

We hope the Legislature will enact real solutions from the whole spectrum of crime prevention.

(RESET Louisiana is a nonpartisan collaboration between the Council for A Better Louisiana, the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana and the Committee of 100, aimed at pursuing public policy that will improve the state's future.)



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