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Trump launches council for prison reform and crime prevention



Photo: Alex Wong / Getty

President Trump on Wednesday launched, by executive order, the Federal Interagency Council on Crime Prevention and Improving Reentry. The president enacted the council with the aim of reducing crime while looking for ways to "provide those who have engaged in criminal activity with greater opportunities to lead productive lives."

Why it matters: Jared Kushner has been pushing for criminal justice reform and just last week, the White House released its prison reform priorities to Congress. This is another big step toward implementing prison reform in the federal criminal justice system, however some criminal justice reform advocates — including Sen. Chuck Grassley — are not settling for prison reform without sentencing reform.

What they're saying:

- “We applaud President Trump for following through on his stated commitment to reducing crime, reforming our prisons and rehabilitating individuals who are hungry for a second chance,” Mark Holden, general counsel at Koch Industries who recently launched the Safe Streets and Second Chances prison reform initiative, told Axios. Holden said he is particularly encouraged that Jared Kushner will be one of the co-chairs.
- While she thinks this is a good step from the administration, Inimai Chettiar, director of the justice program at the Brennan Center for Justice told Axios, "there can be no real criminal justice reform without reducing the number of people entering prison. The President and Attorney General are attempting to kill bipartisan sentencing reform in Congress, and offering incremental reentry reforms instead."

About the executive order:

- The executive order calls for "mental health, vocational training, job creation, after-school programming, substance abuse, and mentoring," for inmates. "Incarceration is necessary to improve public safety, but its effectiveness can be enhanced through evidence-based rehabilitation programs."
- The order asks for a report from the council within 90 days that will outline a timeline for ways to reduce crime and recidivism.

- The council will be co-chaired by Jared Kushner, Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the Assistant to the President of Domestic Policy Andrew Bremberg.
- The council will include the heads of: The Department of the Treasury, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Labor, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Education, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy.
- The executive order asks for ways to reduce recidivism and better re-entry for those coming out of the criminal justice system, but does not suggest looking at changes to sentencing guidelines.

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