



## A Drug Court Within Reach of Every American in Need

### Recommendations for Expanding the Most Effective Criminal Justice Strategy for Non-Violent, Drug-Addicted Offenders

I would also ensure that Congress robustly funds prevention and treatment programs like the Second Chance Act, Drug Courts, and the Drug Free Communities Support Program. I co-sponsored the Second Chance Act and have been a proponent of Drug Courts since my days in Illinois, and I will continue to support (and, in the case of Drug Courts, expand) these programs as President.

— President-Elect Barack Obama  
*The Police Chief*, October 2008.

### Meeting the Needs of Currently Eligible Addicted Offenders

- According to the Urban Institute, there are approximately 55,000 arrestees each year who are eligible for drug court but can't get in due to insufficient slots.
- The average cost for a drug court over existing community resources is \$4,000 per client.
- 55,000 offenders x \$4,000 = \$220 million.
- A federal investment of \$250 million would enable us to reach all of the currently eligible drug offenders, with an additional \$30 million (12%) for research, training and technical assistance.
- The **most conservative** estimate of cost/benefits from drug courts is more than \$2.00 saved for every \$1.00 invested.

This conservative cost/benefit figure reflects only direct and readily measurable cost savings from the criminal justice system:

- fewer law enforcement costs associated with re-arrests
- fewer court hearings, and
- reduced prison and jail beds

- When considering additional savings to the community, drug courts have been shown to reap \$7.00 in benefits for every \$1.00 invested. Therefore, net savings could exceed \$1.5 billion.
  - fewer victims of crime (costs associated with crime);
  - fewer emergency room episodes;
  - fewer deaths;
  - fewer child welfare cases;
  - increased work productivity;

This estimate does not include:

- drug free babies
- increased tax revenue; and
- breaking the cycle of addiction and crime in families.

### **Meeting the Needs of all Nonviolent Addicted Offenders**

- According to the Urban Institute, there are approximately 1.2 million arrestees each year who are addicted to drugs or alcohol, do not pose a serious risk to public safety, and are jail or prison bound.
- Many of these individuals are not currently eligible for drug courts because they were charged with a non-drug offense (e.g., theft or embezzlement), had previously failed in a diversion program or on probation, have a severe psychiatric disorder, or are receiving addiction medication.
- Because these individuals are more involved in drugs and crime, they actually produce a greater cost savings when successfully treated. In fact, when drug courts increase eligibility criteria to include these individuals, \$3.36 is estimated to be saved for every \$1.00 invested.

This conservative cost/benefit figure reflects only direct and readily measurable cost savings from the criminal justice system:

- fewer law enforcement costs associated with re-arrests
- fewer court hearings, and
- reduced prison and jail beds.
- In the past, states have leveraged the federal investment in drug courts by a ratio of 9:1.
- If the states leveraged the federal investment by a conservative ratio of 5:1 (given the current economy), this would enable the states to treat an additional 375,000 drug addicted offenders each year, or approximately 20% of Americans in need.
- If the states continued to leverage the federal investment at a 9:1 ratio, states could treat an additional 625,000 drug addicted offenders each year, or nearly 50% of Americans in need.

- The estimated cost savings for the criminal justice system would exceed \$480 million.
- The estimated cost savings to the community would exceed \$1.4 billion.

For further information, please contact West Huddleston, CEO, **The National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP)** at 703-575-9400, ext. 13 or [whuddleston@nadcp.org](mailto:whuddleston@nadcp.org).