



Home » Briefing Room » Justice News

## JUSTICE NEWS

### Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

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### Attorney General Holder Announces U.S. Adult Correctional System Population Has Dropped to Lowest Level in Nearly a Decade

*In New Video, Attorney General Hails Finding as 'Significant Milestone' That Shows Crime and Incarceration Levels Can Be Reduced at Same Time*

Attorney General Eric Holder announced today that the number of persons under the supervision of adult correctional systems in the United States has fallen to its lowest level since 2003. This finding is highlighted in a study to be released today by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

According to the study, an estimated 6,899,000 persons were under the supervision of adult correctional systems at year end 2013, down from 6,940,500 at year end 2012. The decrease of 41,500 offenders in 2013 resulted in the number of persons under correctional supervision falling below 6.9 million for the first time since 2003.

The Attorney General called the drop a “significant milestone.”

“While we clearly have much more work to do, it is my hope that we are witnessing the start of an overall trend that will continue – and accelerate – as our reform efforts take full effect,” the Attorney General said. “As I have said many times, we cannot incarcerate our way to becoming a safer nation. That’s why we need to focus on commonsense sentencing reforms and on proven, evidence-based solutions like diversion programs for those convicted of low-level, nonviolent offenses.”

The complete text of the Attorney General’s video message is below:

“The Department of Justice is dedicated to ensuring that America’s criminal justice system is as fair, as efficient, and as effective as possible. That’s why, in August of 2013, I launched the “Smart on Crime” Initiative – a targeted effort to enhance the way we charge, sentence, and release individuals in order to end this country’s overreliance on incarceration and to promote efforts that give people the tools they need to return to their communities and lead better and more productive lives.

“In the six years since President Obama took office, we have made important progress in fighting

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crime and advancing our long-term criminal justice efforts. In fact, during this Administration, overall crime has decreased by over 15 percent, while overall incarceration has decreased by nearly 9 percent – the first time these two critical markers have declined together in more than 40 years. And just two months ago, I was able to report that over the past year, the federal prison population declined by roughly 5,000 inmates – the first decrease we’ve seen in many decades.

“Today, I can announce that the number of persons supervised by U.S. adult correctional systems – in prison or jail, or on probation or parole – fell below 6.9 million individuals at the end of 2013. This drop leaves the United States with the smallest population under the authority of adult correctional supervision in nearly a decade.

“This is a significant milestone. It is highlighted in a study to be released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. And while we clearly have much more work to do, it is my hope that we are witnessing the start of an overall trend that will continue – and accelerate – as our reform efforts take full effect.

“As I have said many times, we cannot incarcerate our way to becoming a safer nation. That’s why we need to focus on commonsense sentencing reforms and on proven, evidence-based solutions like diversion programs for those convicted of low-level, nonviolent offenses. We are seeing this approach take root in states across the country, as more and more governors and legislatures recognize that incarceration must be used to punish, deter, and rehabilitate—not merely to warehouse and forget. And here in Washington, D.C., I am proud to work with leaders in Congress from both parties to advance this vital conversation and bring about a paradigm shift in the way our nation approaches criminal justice.

“Of course, I recognize that these are challenging issues, and the changes we seek will not occur overnight. But I am dedicated – and the Department of Justice is committed – to an ongoing effort that strengthens our criminal justice system; lives up to our founding ideals; and builds the safer, more just society that all Americans deserve.”

The full video of the Attorney General’s message is available at <http://www.justice.gov/agwa.php>.

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Business Opportunities  
Small & Disadvantaged  
Business  
Grants

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Forms  
Publications  
Case Highlights  
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Justice News  
The Justice Blog  
Public Schedule  
Videos  
Photo Gallery

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Legal Careers  
Interns, Recent Graduates, and Fellows  
Diversity Policy  
Veteran Recruitment

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