



# Maricopa County Attorney

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Landmark Study Underscores Success of Arizona's Sentencing Laws

PHOENIX, AZ (January 5, 2012) – Arizona has prevented more than a million crimes since 1994 by incarcerating its most dangerous criminals, according to a major research study released today. Titled *Prisoners in Arizona: Truth-in-Sentencing, Time Served and Recidivism*, the study concludes that Arizona's Truth-in-Sentencing (TIS) laws, which ensure that convicted criminals serve at least 85% of their sentence, led to a 17.7% drop in reported crime over a fifteen year period after TIS laws were enacted in 1994.

“This study provides the crucial element that has been missing from the public policy discussion about our criminal justice system, namely, facts,” said Maricopa County Bill Montgomery. “What this research shows is that our current sentencing laws are putting the right people in prison for the right reasons and keeping us all safer as a result,” he added.

Commissioned by the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys Advisory Council, the study notes that Arizona's crime rate fell by 38.5% from 2002 to 2010, more than twice the national rate. At the same time, Arizona's prison population has become increasingly violent. According to the study, more than 95% of inmates are violent and/or repeat felony offenders.

The study also found that, contrary to popular belief, Arizona's prison population has been on a steady downward trend since 2009, dropping by an average of 31 inmates per month after growing by more than 100 inmates per month for 38 years. These numbers reflect the success of diversion programs, substance abuse treatment, probation and other prison alternatives that have prevented low-level offenders from transitioning to full time criminal careers.

“These are precisely the outcomes that proponents of sentencing reform predicted nearly two decades ago,” said Yavapai County Attorney Sheila Polk, who serves as Chairman of the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys Advisory Council. “The very clear, documented benefits we are seeing in Arizona should serve as an important guide to other states that are looking at making similar reforms to their sentencing systems,” Polk added.

*Prisoners in Arizona* is authored by Daryl R. Fischer, Ph.D., a widely respected expert on criminal justice statistical analysis and former Research Manager for the Arizona Department of Corrections. The study builds

on a foundation of information presented in an earlier study Dr. Fischer conducted in 2010. *Prisoners in Arizona* is available for download at [www.azsentencing.org](http://www.azsentencing.org).

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