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## **Gov. Wolf's Criminal Justice Reform Legacy: Removed Barriers, Clean Slates, and Opportunities for Success**

**Philadelphia, PA** – Knowing that Pennsylvania's criminal justice system hasn't always been just, Governor Tom Wolf took office with a goal to limit the negative consequences of contact with the system that can follow a Pennsylvanian for a lifetime. At the NoMo Foundation in Philadelphia today, Gov. Wolf highlighted his reforms that have provided fresh starts and opportunities for success for millions of Pennsylvanians.

"We all deserve the opportunity to learn from our mistakes and do better tomorrow," said Gov. Wolf. "I've prioritized criminal justice reform during my time in office because Pennsylvanians deserve true justice. I know that with a fresh start these individuals will capitalize on opportunities, contribute to society, and own success."

Believing strongly that decisions of the past shouldn't keep Pennsylvanians from making progress—getting jobs, going to college, or renting a house—Gov. Wolf has prioritized second chances. Pardons, Pennsylvania's first-in-the-nation Clean Slate Law, and reentry support are all part of the governor's strategy to support meaningful change that allows for success, reduced recidivism, and safer communities.

Pardons are a powerful workforce development tool. A [recent study by the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia](#) analyzed 10 years of pardons data and found that pardons contributed \$16.5 million to Pennsylvania's economy over the past decade. The report concludes that pardoned Pennsylvanians improve their economic circumstances and ultimately work to the benefit of their local communities.

**Gov. Wolf's revolutionary reforms to Pennsylvania's criminal justice system over the past eight years include:**

- Since taking office, [Gov. Wolf has signed more than 2,000 pardons](#). That's more pardons than have been signed in Pennsylvania over the past 15 years.
- In September, Gov. Wolf and Lt. Gov. John Fetterman [launched the PA Marijuana Pardon Project](#) to quickly pardon thousands of Pennsylvanians from minor, non-violent marijuana-related convictions.

- In his final budget, [Gov. Wolf secured \\$2 million](#) to create programming through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) to support reentry services at the local level for women to give them the best opportunity for a fresh start and recidivism. [First Lady Frances Wolf advocated heavily for the program.](#)
- Gov. Wolf signed legislation to make Pennsylvania's justice system fairer and less costly to taxpayers, while keeping communities safe, [through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative in 2019.](#)
- In 2018, [Gov. Wolf signed House Bill 1419 to create the Clean Slate Law.](#) The first law of its kind in the nation, Clean Slate has given more than 1.2 million Pennsylvanians a fresh start.
- Under Gov. Wolf, Pennsylvania reached the lowest prison population in more than 20 years. This low population allowed the commonwealth to close the doors of two state prisons and has saved millions in taxpayer dollars.
- In 2017, [Gov. Wolf and Attorney General Josh Shapiro launched the Pennsylvania Reentry Council.](#)
- [Gov. Wolf "banned the box" on state employee job applications in 2017](#) to ensure applicants were judged solely on their skills and qualifications.

"I am thankful that Pennsylvania continues to be more reentry-friendly," said Rev. Simmons, executive director of Why Not Prosper. "Collaborative efforts like the ones we are discussing today will make it so much easier for returning citizens to start their lives over and I am ready to keep the work going."

Democratic Whips Representative Jordan Harris, sponsor for Pennsylvania's landmark Clean Slate Law, and Senator Anthony Williams, joined Gov. Wolf at the NoMo Foundation for today's event.

"The NoMo Foundation is an example of just how important second chances can be to our friends and neighbors," said Rep. Harris. "I'm incredibly appreciative that Pennsylvania has a chief executive in Gov. Wolf who has been a great partner for years and understands that getting folks opportunities to better themselves through educational, housing, and employment opportunities is not only the right thing to do for the individual, but also the right thing to do to strengthen our communities."

First Lady Wolf's [Women's Reentry Services Initiative](#) through PCCD is now open for applications. Pennsylvania nonprofits that support women to give them opportunities to successfully transition back into the community and reduce recidivism are encouraged to apply.

"True criminal justice reform requires lawmakers and leaders to look at all levels of how we prosecute and hold people who break the law accountable," said Sen. Williams. "For too long, our system in Pennsylvania has taken broad swings at addressing crime but rarely taken a targeted approach to really consider who we're prosecuting and what happens to those individuals once they reenter society. We know we need change. I commend Gov. Wolf for his efforts to make our criminal justice system fairer and more effective. We need to hold criminals accountable, but we also need to give non-violent individuals who have served their time, or committed a low level offense, an opportunity to build a life where they can support themselves. The governor's recently announced Marijuana Pardon Project and the state's \$2 million dollar investment to support reentry services for incarcerated women, are both great examples of how Pennsylvania is making that change."

“In Pennsylvania, nearly one in three people has a criminal record. This equates to millions of people,” said Sen. Nikil Saval. “A criminal record becomes a life sentence not just for the person carrying it, but also for their loved ones, disrupting the health and financial wellbeing of a whole family for generations. For years, state government has acted only to ratchet up our rate of mass incarceration. I applaud Governor Wolf for his efforts to push against this trend. Our success in turning the tide is a matter of economic and fiscal responsibility, of public health, of equity, and of racial justice.”

Gov. Wolf has served for two terms as a leader consistently at work for the people of Pennsylvania. Learn more about how his [Priorities for Pennsylvania](#) have fueled the commonwealth’s comeback, leaving Pennsylvania in a much better place than when he arrived.

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