

Overview of NORA

The Nonviolent Offender Rehabilitation Act of 2008



The Nonviolent Offender Rehabilitation Act (NORA) offers common-sense solutions to California's prison overcrowding crisis.

First, NORA expands the diversion of nonviolent offenders to addiction treatment. Second, NORA provides rehabilitation programs to nonviolent prisoners and parolees, and prevents them from being returned to prison for minor violations. Third, NORA motivates participants to complete treatment and rehabilitation through an appropriate mix of incentives, rewards, sanctions and consequences. Finally, NORA ensures that more and better treatment and rehabilitation is provided to at-risk youth. NORA's major components are:

- 1 Treatment diversion programs for adults.** NORA creates a unified system of care and provides \$385 million per year to pay for drug treatment and related costs. Nonviolent drug offenders would be placed in one of three different levels of care and supervision, based on their criminal history and drug problem severity. Participants who fail at the lower levels could be moved up to the more intensive levels, or could be jailed for noncompliance. Completing the prescribed course of treatment can lead to the participant's drug offense being dropped from his or her criminal record.
- 2 Prison system and parole reforms.** NORA makes rehabilitation a real priority for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, while limiting the use of prison beds to punish minor parole violations by nonviolent offenders. An independent oversight panel would have authority over major aspects of the implementation of NORA.
- 3 Youth programs.** NORA commits about \$65 million per year to drug treatment and other support programs for youth, funding the creation of a system of care for young people under the age of 18 where no system exists now. Additional money for youth treatment would come from fines paid for possession of marijuana, an offense which, for adults and for minors, would be reclassified from a misdemeanor to an infraction. Young people under the age of 18 would be sent to a drug education class if found guilty of possessing marijuana.

Because NORA would sharply limit the incarceration of nonviolent offenders, the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) projects that the measure would save California \$1 billion or more each year in prison and parole costs. Much of the annual savings would be used instead to pay for the measure's new treatment and rehabilitation programs. According to the LAO, the state would see additional net savings of \$2.5 billion over several years as prison-construction costs would be reduced by NORA's reforms.

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