

Smart-on-Crime Coalition calls for criminal justice reform

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AUSTIN—The Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission and other members of the Smart-on-Crime Coalition have urged state legislators to enact criminal justice reform, including programs to help ex-offenders re-enter the free world.



Gus Reyes “Our commitment to justice is one of the reasons we joined the Smart-on-Crime Coalition,” CLC Director Gus Reyes said. “We want a justice system that is just. This means both supporting victims and holding offenders accountable, but also giving former offenders who have served their sentences the opportunity to re-enter society.”

Reyes joined other representatives from the Smart-on-Crime Coalition in announcing the group’s legislative agenda at a Dec. 14 news conference in Austin.

The coalition brings together business leaders, advocacy groups, and faith-based and other nonprofit organizations to pursue a plan to address, reduce and prevent crime. The statewide coalition’s stated goal is to make Texas’ criminal justice system smarter, safer and more cost-effective.

“As a person of faith, I believe the opportunity for redemption should be given to those who have served their sentence and are looking for a second chance to fulfill their God-given potential,” Reyes said.

“That’s why we believe it’s so important to scale up programs for re-entry—life-skills training, education and employment. It’s why we’re so excited about the re-entry vocational pilot program, which is part of the Smart-on-Crime agenda.”

The re-entry vocational program aims to help formerly incarcerated individuals become productive members of communities and reduce recidivism.

Other Smart-on-Crime Coalition members who joined Reyes include Bill Hammond with the Texas Association of Business, Marc Levin and Derek Cohen with the Texas Public Policy Foundation, Traci Berry with Goodwill of Central Texas, Craig DeRoche with Prison Fellowship, Terri Burke with the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas and Shakira Pumphrey with the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition.

In addition to criminal justice reform, other legislative priorities for the CLC in the 85th Texas Legislature include efforts to strengthen public education, improve access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, increase funding for Child and Family Protective Services, oppose the expansion of gambling and protect the separation of church and state.

For more information on the CLC legislative agenda, click [here](#).