

February 2016 Action
Educate your Senators about the Youth PROMISE Act
With an Email and Follow-up Phone Call
Initiate or Continue the Conversation about What it Is, and Why it Matters

Making stronger, safer communities – using proven peacebuilding tools – and ending epidemics of youth incarceration and violence – is what this action is about.

Current Active Negotiations in the Senate Substantially include the YPA – this is an important moment to continue educating your senators about it.

- You can remind them of how important this issue and this solution are.
- Maybe they, or their staff, have questions you can begin or continue to address.

Request: Co-sponsor the bill - **S.1770/HR. 2197 - Cong. switchboard (202)224-3121**
E-mails and phone calls can be very brief – most important is that you DO IT!!

Preparation:

1. Please ascertain if your Senators are co-sponsors (unlikely) - you can check this by bill name or number (S 1770, HR 2197) at www.congress.gov.
2. You may already have an ongoing conversation with your Senators' staff about YPA – review any relevant notes to determine next steps in that conversation.
3. Review this Action Sheet for inspiration/information about the YPA, and the need.
4. Most Congress Members have a contact form on their website that allows you to submit a typed letter. On their site you can also find phone contact information. Today we ask you to **send email and also make a key, follow-up phone call.**
5. Critical Follow-up: Call to emphasize your request, to seek to learn your Senators' thoughts/feelings about the bill, and possibly to schedule a time to meet in-person. Please call their D.C. office, and ask for the staff member most concerned with issues involving youth, education, and/or juvenile justice.

Letter (email) Outline (please personalize, so every letter isn't the same)

1. Introduce yourself briefly (I am a grandmother/teacher/student/etc.)
2. Speak from your heart. Share any relevant personal story(s) about why this issue is important to you. Do you know any youth who have been impacted by violence? Have you been particularly affected or moved by the tragic waste of youth incarceration? Are you aware of any local, regional, or national resources?
3. Share some statistics on violence prevention and incarceration (see below).
4. Call to Action: Ask for Co-sponsorship. And request that they respond to you.

Sample Talking Points

YPA Bill: Youth PROMISE Act (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) is bipartisan legislation that will give our communities the support and funding they need to effectively address youth violence and incarceration issues. By specifically focusing on violence prevention and intervention strategies, this bill ensures we are funding programs that save lives and give every young person the opportunity to meet his or her potential.

The lead sponsors:

House - Bobby Scott (D-VA), Walter Jones (R-NC), Tony Cardenas (D-CA), and Trey Gowdy (R-SC). **Senate** - Bob Casey (D-PA), James Inhofe (R-OK), Gary Peters (D-MI), and David Vitter (R-LA).

The Challenges:

The US imprisons more youth per capita than the next 12 industrialized nations combined, and is the only one imprisoning juveniles for life without possibility of parole.

Nearly 60 percent of boys classified as bullies in grades six through nine were convicted of at least one crime by age 24. 40 percent had three or more convictions by age 24.¹

African-American youth are nearly five times as likely to be confined as their white peers. Our system treats youth of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos, more punitively than similar white youth²

Example Solutions YPA might amplify:

In Chicago, the Becoming a Man program, which places disadvantaged boys from 7th-10th grade into mentoring relationships, saw among their participants a 44 percent drop in arrests for violent crime and an up to 23 percent increase in graduation rates.³

Pennsylvania tried a similar approach to the Youth PROMISE Act, and over a ten year period they saved \$5 for every \$1 invested.⁴ Due to the shrinking number of detainees, they were able to close a 100-bed juvenile detention facility.

Training in parenting skills, for parents of children exhibiting aggressive behavior, was estimated about three times as cost-effective as the “three-strikes” law in California.⁵

If you are aware of any **proven or promising local solutions**, please share them!!!

Over the past 15 years, Connecticut has developed an array of new community-based supervision and treatment programs for delinquent and behaviorally troubled youth. While reducing youth incarceration considerably, they also **spent \$2 million less on juvenile programs and facilities in the 2011-12 fiscal year than 10 years earlier.**⁶

More quotable statistics and citations at: www.peacealliance.org/stats

¹ “Bullying Prevention is Crime Prevention,” Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003

² <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-YouthIncarcerationInfographic-2013.pdf>

³ <http://www.youth-guidance.org/our-programs/b-a-m-becoming-a-man/>

⁴ Bumbarger, Jones, et al., “The Economic return on PCCD’s Investment in Research-based Programs: A Cost-Benefit Assessment of Delinquency and Prevention in Pennsylvania”, The Prevention Research Center for the Promotion of Human Development, Penn State, March 2008, p. 3

http://www.prevention.psu.edu/pubs/docs/PCCD_Report2.pdf

⁵ Greenwood PW et al. Diverting children from a life of crime: measuring costs and benefits. Rand, 1996.

⁶ http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/jpi_juvenile_justice_reform_in_ct.pdf