

Illinois' \$83 Billion Mistake

A supplement to

The \$3.4 Trillion Mistake: The Cost of Mass Incarceration and Criminalization, and How Justice Reinvestment Can Build a Better Future for All

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Since the early 1980s, Illinois has followed the national “tough-on-crime” trend of investing heavily in police, prosecutors, courts, jails, and prisons to address not only public safety issues but also public health concerns such as the effects of poverty, mental illness, and drug use. This report examines the cost of criminal justice system expansion over the 30 year period from 1982 to 2012; provides a comprehensive analysis of expenditures across four categories of justice system spending including (1) police, (2) legal/judicial, (3) corrections, and (4) immigration enforcement; and, finally, considers alternative investments in resources aimed at addressing the “root causes” of crime and violence.

Key findings include a massive investment in justice system expansion at the federal, state, and taxpayer levels, with cumulative “surplus justice spending” totaling \$3.4 trillion nationally and \$83 billion in Illinois over the last three decades. For example, in 1982, before the escalation of the failed “War on Drugs” and rise of “tough on crime,” the U.S. already had an expansive justice system. In fact, our incarcerated population then — 621,885 — would still rank as the third highest in the world today, behind only China and Russia. In 1982, justice system spending totaled \$90 billion with Illinois justice spending among the highest in nation, tied for third with Texas at \$4 billion, behind only California and New York. By 2012, Illinois justice system spending had cumulatively inflated by 112% to a whopping \$8.5 billion annually, amounting to \$83 billion in “surplus justice spending” over 30 years. Skyrocketing state spending on the justice system has squandered overwhelming monetary and human capital, without any meaningful return in public safety.

Surplus Justice Spending: additional spending on criminal justice system expansion, above what we would have spent if the size of the justice system had simply remained the same as in 1982

The wasted resources over three decades has led to an astounding increase in the correctional population, significant increases across all areas of the justice system — especially on policing — and a hefty bill with “surplus justice spending” climbing to \$4.5 billion annually. The following sections highlight key data related to criminal justice system expansion as well as a brief examination of how Illinois’ resources could otherwise be put to use.

Correctional Population

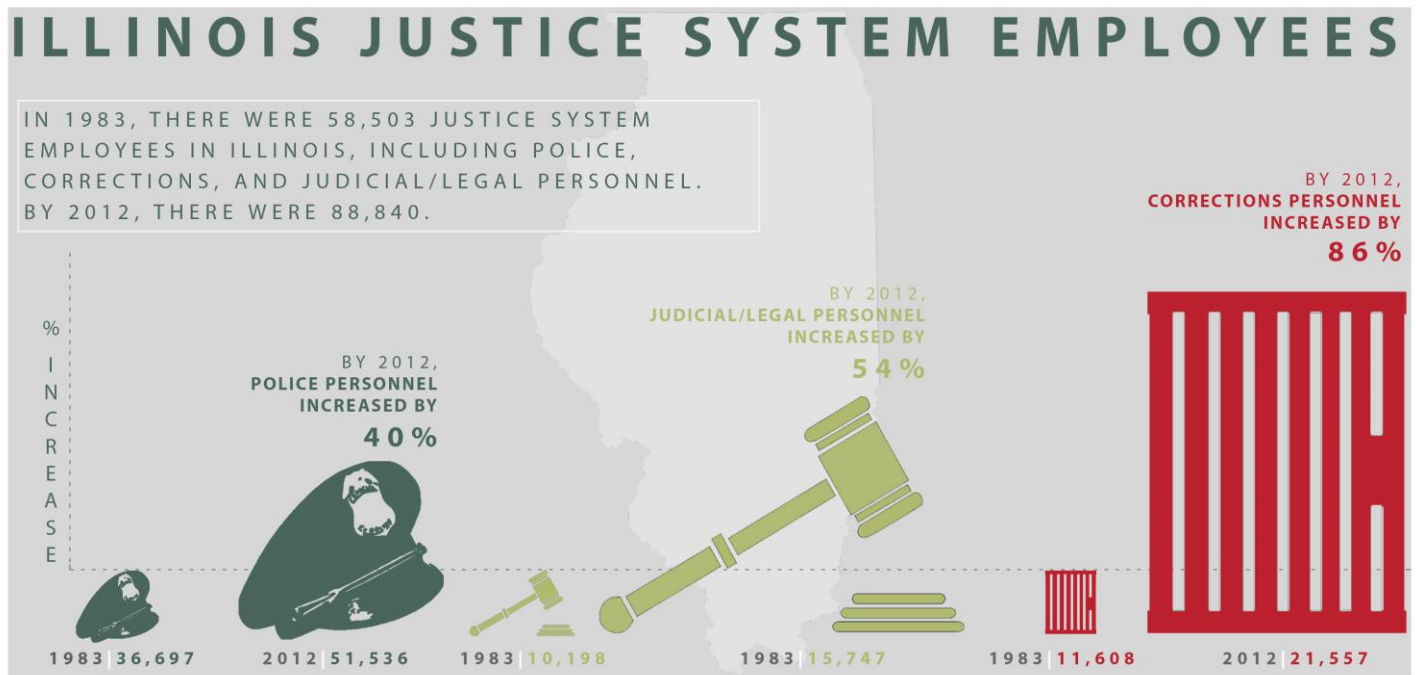
- In 1980, Illinois had 20,124 people in jail or prison. By 2013, that had risen to 69,300, an increase of 244%. As a result, Illinois now has the most overcrowded prisons in the country.¹
- In 1980, Illinois had another 72,867 people on probation or parole. By 2013, that had more than doubled to 151,963.²

1 in 45 Illinois adults is either in prison, in jail, or on probation or parole



Justice System Employees

- In 1983, there were 58,503 justice system employees in Illinois, including police, corrections, and judicial/legal personnel. By 2012, there were 88,840.



Justice Spending³

- In 1982, Illinois already had a large justice system, totaling \$4 billion in police, corrections, and judicial/legal spending.
- By 2012, Illinois was spending \$8.5 billion, an increase of 112%. After adjusting for inflation, Illinois spends \$4.5 billion more per year on the justice system than it did 30 years earlier.
 - About 56% of Illinois' justice spending goes to police, 18% to judicial/legal, and 25% to corrections.⁴
 - Only 26% comes from the state budget. 74% comes from county and municipal budgets.⁵
- In 1982, annual justice spending amounted to \$996 per Illinois household.⁶ By 2012, that had increased to \$1,789.⁷



Justice Expenditures in Cook County

- Cook County's total justice spending increased by 138%, from \$538 million in 1980 to \$1.3 billion in 2012.
- The Chicago Police Department's budget nearly doubled from \$1.2 billion in 1982 to \$2.2 billion in 2012.

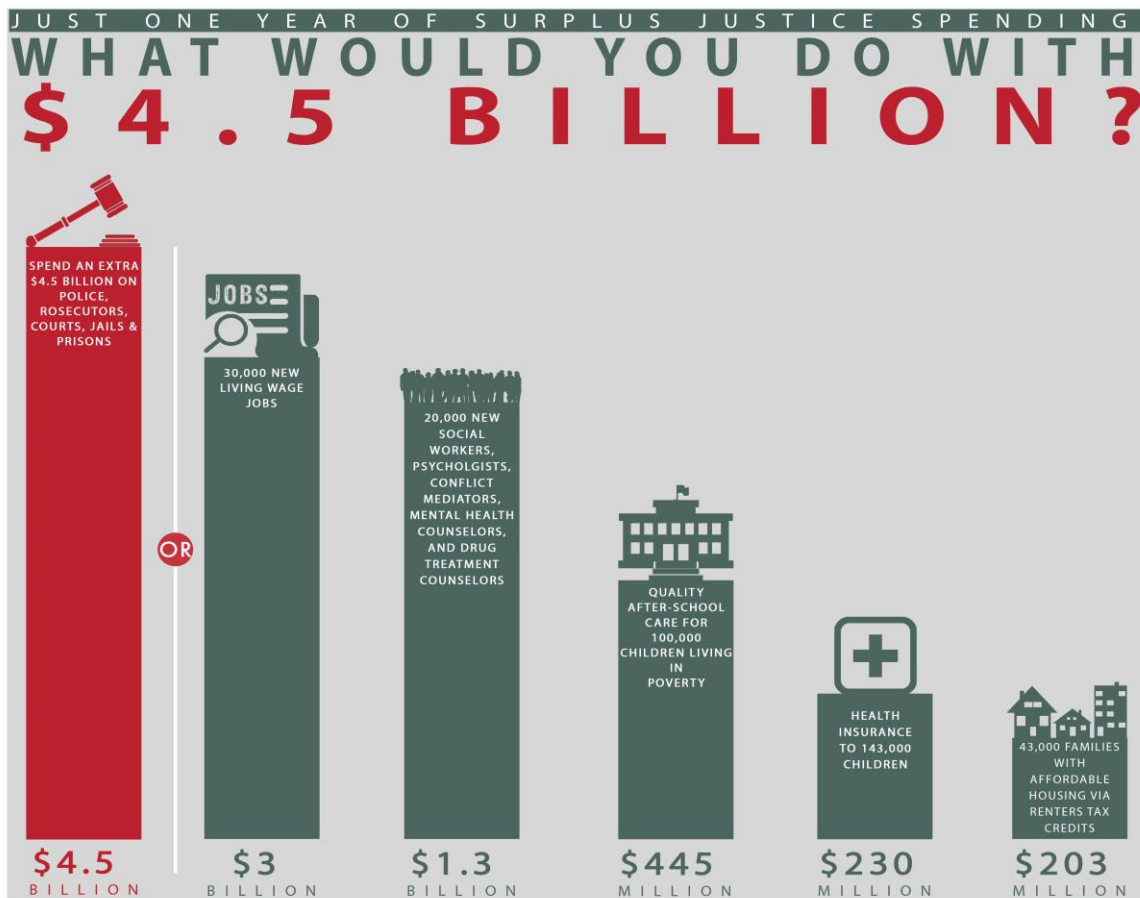
Sources: City of Chicago; Bureau of Justice Statistics

Surplus Justice Spending in Illinois

- Cumulatively, in the three decades from 1983 to 2012, Illinois spent **\$83 billion** more on the justice system than it would have had spending remained steady since 1982.
- Maintaining Illinois justice spending at the current amount for the next thirty years would prospectively yield **\$135 billion** in surplus justice spending compared to 1982, not accounting for inflation.
- This would increase justice spending per Illinois household to \$28,315 annually.⁸

While the last 30 years have been very costly with little gain in terms of public safety, the same mistake need not be repeated over the next 30 years. Instead, Illinois could make critical investments in jobs, education, healthcare, housing, wraparound supports for youth, and other strategies for improving public health and safety.

Imagine how just one year of Illinois surplus justice spending, **\$4.5 billion**, could be used instead:



- 30,000 new living wage jobs = \$3 billion⁹
- Quality after-school care for 100,000 children living in poverty = \$445 million⁹
- 43,000 families with affordable housing via Renters Tax Credits = \$203 million⁹
- Health insurance to 143,000 children = \$230 million⁹
- 20,000 new social workers, psychologists, conflict mediators, mental health counselors, and drug treatment counselors = \$1.3 billion

As Illinois faces budget crisis after budget crisis, with community resources shuttered while poverty rises and crime follows, the state faces a critical juncture. Bipartisan efforts are underway to both reduce Illinois' prison system and repair the state budget—so that extra-curricular programming and wrap-around supports can return to schools, so that all people can access mental and physical healthcare, so that the illness of addiction can be treated rather than circulated in and out of in the costly prison system, so that schools can stay open and offer safe learning environments, and so that communities can access the resources they need. It is clear that the state must reign in justice system expansion and instead reinvest resources into treating the root causes of crime by ensuring that all communities in Illinois have what they need to be safe, healthy and strong.

¹ Illinois Policy Institute, *Illinois Leads Nation in Overcrowded Prisons* (10/13/15), at <https://www.illinoispolicy.org/illinois-leads-nation-in-overcrowded-prisons/>.

² The “1 in 45” figure is based on 2014 state population figure of 9,895,846 residents over the age of 18. U.S. Census Bureau, *American FactFinder, Table K200104: Total Population by Age, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*.

³ All spending figures have been adjusted for inflation and presented in 2016 dollars. The figures were adjusted to 2016 dollars using the CPI conversion tables produced by Professor Robert Sahr. Oregon State University, College of Liberal Arts – School of Public Policy, *Individual Year Conversion Factor Tables*, at <http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/spp/polisci/faculty-staff/robert-sahr/inflation-conversion-factors-years-1774-estimated-2024-dollars-recent-years/individual-year-conversion-factor-table-0>.

⁴ Bureau of Justice Statistics, *2012 Justice Expenditure and Employment Extracts*.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Based on total number of Illinois households from 1980. U.S. Census Bureau, *General Population Characteristics, United States Summary: 1980*, Table 61, at https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980/1980censusofpopu8011u_bw.pdf.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *American FactFinder, Table S1101: Households and Families, 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *American FactFinder, Table B08202: Household Size by Number of Workers in Household, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*.

⁹ The average costs of a new living-wage job, afterschool programs, and of hiring a new social worker, psychologist, conflict mediator, mental health counselor, or drug treatment counselor were derived from the figures included within *The \$3.4 Trillion Mistake: The Cost of Mass Incarceration and Over-Criminalization, and How Justice Reinvestment Can Build a Better Future for All*. Pre-K-12 spending figures were based on an estimate of 2,098,000 students and an average per-pupil expenditure of \$12,521. National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2022* (Feb. 2014), at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014051.pdf>; Illinois Report Card 2014-15, at <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/State.aspx?source=Environment&source2=PerStudentSpending&Stateid=IL>. The number of Illinois families living in poverty comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, *American FactFinder, Table S1702: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*. Tuition revenues were taken from Illinois Board of Higher Education, *Annual Report on Public University Revenues and Expenditures: Fiscal Year 2015*, Table 5, at <http://www.ibhe.org/Fiscal%20Affairs/PDF/FY15RevenueandExpenditures.pdf>. Renters’ Tax Credit figures came from Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Renters’ Tax Credit Would Promote Equity and Advance Balanced Housing Policy*, Appendix 3a (8/21/13), at <http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/7-13-12hous-appendix3.pdf>. Uninsured children figures come from the American Association of Pediatrics, *Medicaid Facts*, at https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/federaladvocacy_medicaidfactsheet_illinois.pdf.