



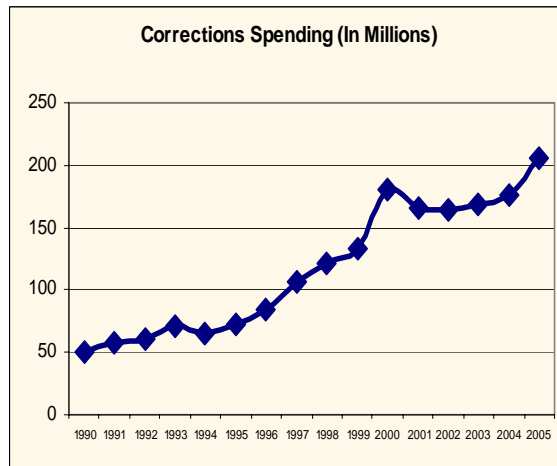
# Nebraska

*"What we found was the political mantra of 'lock 'em up' had long-term financial consequences and still wasn't achieving results."*

*—Former State Senator and Speaker of the Legislature  
Kermit Brashear*

## Prison Population & Cost Indicators

- Nebraska's corrections budget has nearly tripled in the past 10 years, rising from \$72 million in 1995 to \$206 million in 2005.
- In that same period, the prison population increased 34 percent, while the number of offenders on probation decreased 7 percent.
- The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) is already overcrowded, operating at 138 percent of design capacity. The state's prison system is projected to grow by 567 more inmates, to 5,273 by 2011.



## Drivers of Incarceration & Spending

- The growth in Nebraska's prison population has resulted from a number of factors. The state enacted longer criminal sentences, including passing a "truth-in-sentencing" law in 1993 and a "good time law" in the mid-1990s that required inmates to earn good time by working or participating in prison programs.
- Greater numbers of drug offenders have been incarcerated. In 1996, drug offenders accounted for 22 percent of new admissions to prison in Nebraska; in 2005, they represented 30 percent.
- The state's diminishing use of community corrections for low-risk offenders contributed to the increases in incarceration and spending. At the same time that sentence lengths were increasing, both the parole release rate and the use of probation declined.

## Public Safety Performance Project

An operating project of The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Public Safety Performance Project seeks to help states advance fiscally sound, data-driven policies and practices in sentencing and corrections that protect public safety, hold offenders accountable and control corrections costs. The project helps states diagnose the factors driving prison growth and provides policy audits to identify options for reform, drawing on solid research, promising approaches and best practices in other states. The initiative also helps state officials, practitioners and others share state-of-the-art knowledge and ideas through policy forums, public opinion surveys, multi-state meetings, national, regional and state-level convenings, and online information about what works.

### PARTNERS

The project works with the Pew Center on the States and a number of highly respected external partners, including the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Vera Institute of Justice, to provide expert, nonpartisan information and assistance to states.

### CONTACT

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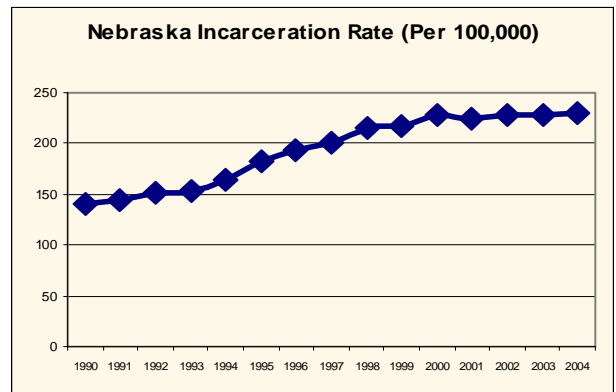
*“Everyone agreed we needed to do something meaningful as an alternative to incarceration.”*

*—Ellen Fabian-Brokofsky, Chief Probation Administrator*

## Opportunities & Action

- Momentum for reform has been building in Nebraska since 2000, when then-Department of Correctional Services Director Harold Clarke, with the support of then-Governor Mike Johanns and then-State Senator Kermit Brashear, asked the Vera Institute of Justice to help the state explore how it might safely plan, rather than build, its way out of prison overcrowding.
- As part of this effort, the state created a permanent Community Corrections Council (CCC). The CCC is charged with expanding and improving community-based punishments, re-entry programs and services for offenders, and with developing sentencing guidelines for felony offenders.

The Public Safety Performance Project and Vera are providing nonpartisan research, analysis and expertise to help Nebraska leaders consider additional policy options to protect public safety, reduce prison overcrowding and control corrections spending. Options include creating sentencing guidelines for felony drug offenders, increasing the use of evidence-based community corrections and treatment options, improving data collection and information-sharing among agencies, and evaluating probation programs.



### By the Numbers

2005 Index crime rate per 100,000 (rank):	3710 (27 <sup>th</sup> )	2005 Corrections spending:	\$196 million
2005 Violent crime rate per 100,000 (rank):	287 (32 <sup>nd</sup> )	2005 Corrections share of budget:	5.5%
2005 Incarceration rate per 100,000 (rank):	237 (44 <sup>th</sup> )	2001 Releases reincarcerated:	23%
2006 Prison population:	4,706	2011 Projected prison population:	5,273

Sources: FBI Uniform Crime Reports; Bureau of Justice Statistics, various publications; National Association of State Budget Officers “State Expenditure Report, FY05” (corrections general fund expenditures as a percent of total general fund expenditures); “Public Safety, Public Spending: Forecasting America’s Prison Population 2007-2011,” Pew Public Safety Performance Project; Nebraska Department of Corrections.

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