

NATIONAL POLLING PREVIEW: AFRICAN-AMERICAN VOTERS WANT COMMONSENSE PRETRIAL REFORM

America's criminal justice system is a maze: once you get in, it's hard to get out—and it's devastating to many African-American families and communities. A new national poll from the Pretrial Justice Institute shows that African-American voters want change at the front door—or pretrial stage—of the criminal justice system.

African Americans are disproportionately penalized by detention decisions that are based on wealth instead of safety. [They are more likely to be required to pay money to be released from jail before trial and to pay higher amounts.](#) From [Los Angeles](#) to [Baltimore](#), studies show that African-American communities are losing tens of millions of dollars to money bail payments—dollars that cannot be recovered, **even if the charges are dropped or the person is found not guilty.** Commonsense pretrial reform is key to ending mass incarceration and to creating safer, healthier communities.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN VOTERS ARE READY FOR CHANGE

- 72% of voters agree that the criminal justice system needs significant change.
- African-American voters (86%) believe that wealthy people enjoy better outcomes from the criminal justice system than poor and working-class Americans.
- 78% of voters believe that whites enjoy substantially better outcomes from the system than people of color.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN VOTERS SUPPORT DETENTION ONLY WHEN IT PROTECTS PUBLIC SAFETY

- 78% of African-American voters want to reduce the number of arrests for low-level, nonviolent offenses by issuing citations rather than arresting people.
- 73% would limit the number of days a person not charged with a serious violent crime can stay in jail pretrial if he or she cannot afford money bail.
- 77% would allow judges to detain people charged with a serious violent crime in jail without bail **when it has been found in court that there are no options to get them back to court or to protect public safety.**

AFRICAN-AMERICAN VOTERS WANT COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS

- 65% of African-American voters would stop the practice of jailing people who cannot afford money bail.
- 90% would support educational courses and counseling to help people released before trial show up for their court appearances and not be arrested on new charges.

Unnecessary pretrial detention due to an inability to pay money bail has serious and compounding consequences. People lose their jobs, their housing—even custody of their children. Innocent people are pressured to accept guilty pleas. Even [three days in jail](#) can leave some people more likely to get arrested on new charges or to fail to appear in court.



90% favor support services for people awaiting trial in the community who are victims of domestic violence

86% support mental health services for people awaiting trial in the community



74% favor support services for people awaiting trial in the community who suffer from drug or alcohol addictions



National Urban League
WASHINGTON
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