

All

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A Drug Policy Alliance release.

Your Chance to Make a Difference

Ethan Nadelmann, Executive Director

We can end the war on drugs. We can shift our country's focus from punishment to humane, common sense solutions. But we can only do it with your help.

As a DPA member, you are at the forefront of the burgeoning drug policy reform movement. With your support, we've taken issues that long hovered at the fringes of U.S. and international politics – such as marijuana legalization, health-based drug policies grounded in harm reduction, and ending mass incarceration – and brought them into the mainstream.

You might think the war on drugs is ending. It's not. More and more politicians sound like they're reading

from our talking points but their rhetoric often fails to be matched with meaningful steps to reduce the role of criminalization in drug policy.

People like you have led us to the tipping point on marijuana legalization. For 20 years, DPA has been at the forefront of marijuana law reform and we're now working to advance a safe, responsible, ethical and inclusive industry. Beginning with California in 1996, DPA has led roughly half of the campaigns that have legalized medical marijuana, most recently in New York in 2014. We're also the only organization that played a role in each of the victorious campaigns to legalize marijuana more broadly.

Above: DPA staff and supporters at a vigil honoring people missing as a result of the war on drugs.

And I'm especially proud of DPA's work to reduce the death, disease, crime and suffering associated with both drug use and drug prohibition. Beginning a decade ago, DPA took the lead in addressing the crisis of overdose deaths, which have surpassed auto accidents as the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. We've played a key role in passing "911 Good Samaritan" laws and other overdose prevention reforms in dozens of states around the country. People all over the U.S. now have better access to the tools they need to save the life of a loved one.

When it comes to the role of the drug war in driving mass incarceration, I'd say we're at more of a turning point. The country seems headed in a new *(Continues on page 3)*

Introducing the Jack and Joy Fishman Program to Prevent Overdose

Joy Fishman

If you're like me, you might have already been affected by the issue of drug overdose. It's now the leading cause of accidental death, an urgent crisis that needs our attention. I know this all too well – my son Jonathan died of an overdose ten years ago.

That's why I've decided to become active with the Drug Policy Alliance. Through DPA I've learned that there are effective ways to address this crisis, like promoting 911 Good Samaritan laws and helping people access the overdose antidote, naloxone, which is a safe, generic, non-psychoactive drug that works quickly and is easy to administer.

By coincidence, my husband Jack invented naloxone many years ago, but I've only fully realized what an everyday life-saver it is since working with DPA.

Two years ago, Jack passed away. To honor Jack and Jonathan, and the millions of Americans who have lost

a loved one to an overdose, I've provided a grant to DPA to scale up their desperately-needed policy reform work.

So please join me in supporting this very important issue. You can be certain that your support for this program will save lives.

To learn more about how you can support DPA's overdose prevention efforts, contact Clovis Thorn at cthorn@drugpolicy.org or 212.613.8046.

Fixing Our Broken Bail System



Roseanne Scotti
New Jersey State Director

Mustafa Willis had a job and no criminal record. After being arrested in Newark, he was forced to remain in jail for months because he could not afford to pay the amount of bail that was set for him. While he was in jail, he lost his job and a close family member passed away. Desperate, his family turned to a for-profit bail bond company to secure his release. Eventually, the charges against him were dropped. But he and the family members were saddled with a \$7,000 bill!

In most places in this country, when someone is arrested they have the option of posting bail in order to be released pending trial. That opportunity isn't an option, however, if you don't have the money. As a result, thousands of people remain in jail awaiting trial.

People who can't afford bail can spend months and even years in jail waiting for their day in court. The damage they suffer is incalculable. Individuals held in jail pending trial are three times more likely to be sentenced to prison than those who remain free pretrial. Their prison sentences are two times longer

than those released pending trial. They lose jobs, housing and connections to family and community.

Even those who manage to buy their freedom pending trial pay an unfair penalty. Mustafa Willis's story highlights the failure of the current system and one of its most corrupt practices – commercial bail.

People who don't have the resources to pay for bail on their own often turn to for-profit bail bond companies. For a price, usually 10 percent of the bail amount, the company will secure the person's liberty pending trial. It doesn't matter if charges are dropped or the person is found not guilty, the bail bond company still gets paid. Individuals forced to use for-profit bail companies often find themselves punished to the

Against steep odds, DPA took on this injustice in New Jersey and won major reforms. The new law ushers in the broadest state-wide bail reform in the nation.

tune of thousands of dollars even if they are never convicted of a crime. In this way, the for-profit bail bond industry preys on the most vulnerable individuals and communities. Only two countries in the world, the United States and the Philippines, allow this predatory system under which private companies profit at the expense of people who are presumed innocent.

A DPA-commissioned report found that three-quarters of those in New Jersey jails were awaiting trial rather than serving a sentence. More than half of them warehoused for nonviolent offenses, including drug charges. Almost 40 percent were incarcerated simply because they couldn't afford sometimes small amounts of bail – we're talking a

couple hundred dollars in some cases. The average length of time people wait in jail is 10 months. The vast majority of those locked up are poor people of color.

Against steep odds, DPA took on this injustice in New Jersey and won major reforms to New Jersey's bail system last November. The new law ushers in the broadest state-wide bail reform in the nation and comprehensively overhauls the state's broken bail system. Now pretrial release decisions will be made based on risk rather than resources and thousands of low-income individuals – many of whom are behind bars for a low-level drug law violation – will avoid unnecessary jail time. The Drug Policy Alliance and our lobbying arm, Drug Policy Action, played a leading role in efforts to pass both legislation and an accompanying ballot initiative.

The tragic death earlier this year of Kalief Browder, held in New York's Rikers Island jail for three years before the charges against him – for allegedly stealing a backpack – were dismissed, has focused the nation's attention on our broken bail system. What New Jersey did to reform its bail system – basing pretrial release decisions on risk rather than resources, limiting the use of bail and allowing for nonfinancial conditions for release pending trial – can be a model for states across the country.

Justice demands we fix our broken bail system. Thank you for your foresight and support that's making this possible.

We Can't End Mass Incarceration Until We End the Drug War

Daniel Robelo
Research Coordinator

The U.S. has reached a turning point in its epidemic of mass incarceration. A consensus is growing across the country – from the White House and Congress to cities and states of all sizes – that enough is enough. The nation is finally engaged in a frank discussion about how to get out of this mess.

The momentum is heartening but not nearly enough. We've only scratched the surface while leaving the system intact.

We must do more. Ending the war on drugs – a major driver of incarceration – is crucial. Nearly half a million people, whose most serious offense was a drug law violation (which by definition means nonviolent) are incarcerated today. That's ten times the number in 1980. The burden of incarceration falls overwhelmingly on black people and Latinos, although rates of drug use and sales are similar among people of different races and ethnicities.

Here are three steps that we're working on to dismantle the drug war at the local, state and federal levels:



1 Eliminate mandatory minimum sentences. Half of the federal prison population is incarcerated for a drug offense. Most weren't drug kingpins, but rather low-level sellers, couriers, middlemen. For many, there's no good public safety reason to keep them behind bars for lengthy periods. As President Obama suggested last month, we need to get rid of draconian sentencing laws entirely.

2 Eliminate criminal penalties for possession of all drugs. More than a million people are arrested and almost 50,000 of them are admitted to state prisons each year for drug possession. Tens of thousands more languish in local jails, either awaiting

trial or serving a sentence. Instead of arresting and incarcerating them, let's give them a citation and offer them treatment if needed. That's what Portugal started doing nearly 15 years ago. The sky didn't fall – but rates of drug arrests, incarceration, disease and overdose deaths did. Some cities and states are already moving in this direction. DPA and our allies in California worked to successfully approve a law in 2014 (Prop. 47) that changed six low-level crimes, including drug possession, from felonies to misdemeanors – already significantly easing jail overcrowding and saving millions.

3 Eliminate probation and parole revocations for drug-related violations. More than a million people are currently on probation or parole for drug offenses. Depending on their state, many will be incarcerated or re-incarcerated for minor technical violations – commonly for failing a drug test due to marijuana use. This also applies to the almost four million other people under correctional supervision whose original offenses did not involve drugs. Closing this revolving door is vital to turning the tide on mass incarceration.

If widely adopted, these three reforms would make a real dent in the incarceration epidemic – far more so than anything else we've tried to date.

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(Continued from cover)

direction, with President Obama and several presidential candidates from both major parties speaking out forcefully for reform. We're making progress with victories that reduce the number of people behind bars for drug

law violations even as we advance a longer-term vision of significantly reducing incarceration in our country by ending the criminalization of drug use and possession. But it's like trying to turn around an ocean liner – even when you point it in a new direction it still takes a long time.

None of this is easy and we need your support more than ever. We still have a lot of work to do before we can claim

victory in the struggle for drug policies grounded in science, compassion, health and human rights.

We're counting on you to make that victory possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DR' or similar initials.

End the Drug War – With Style

The Drug Policy Alliance partnered with Human Intonation, an apparel brand dedicated to raising social awareness, to create three new t-shirts and tank tops that spread the love for drug policy reform.

Support the movement!
Visit drugpolicy.org/store and get your
#NoMoreDrugWar tee or tank today!



John Oliver Slams the Drug War on the Regular

HBO's John Oliver has been regularly exposing the absurdity and horrors of our country's disastrous war on drugs. Oliver hits the drug war from all angles, from mandatory minimums to bail reform to asset forfeiture, and he's helping us make an influential and far-reaching impact.

At right: Oliver discusses DPA's efforts to reform bail laws in New Jersey



Questions? Feedback?

We love to hear from you. Contact the *Ally* by writing to director of communications strategy Jag Davies at: newsletter@drugpolicy.org

www.drugpolicy.org

**We are
the Drug
Policy
Alliance.**