

STACEY for WISCONSIN

Paid for by Stacey for Wisconsin

Per the Bureau of Justice Statistics, there were 1,204,300 prisoners at the end of 2021. The Prison Policy Initiative report from March 14, 2023, puts the total number of Americans behind bars at almost 2 million. That includes 98 Federal prisons, 1,566 state prisons, 3,116 local jails, and 1,323 juvenile correctional facilities. 1 in 5 prisoners are locked up from a drug offense. 427,000 are awaiting trial. These numbers alone are staggering, but the real problem, aside from the astounding dollar amount, is the frightening effect on our society, on families, and how this defines who we are as a nation. Fourteen states in our nation have a smaller population than our prison system. That is almost a third of our states which is alarming by itself. To make real progress, we cannot take the lazy way out and let the narrative simply be the blame game. The left, and Senator Baldwin tend to blame race for why the prison population is the way I described it in the first paragraph but they refuse to tackle the commission side of the crime. In her August 6, 2015, discussion on the Federal Prison system, she begins "I usually love to brag about my state, but...in Wisconsin African-Americans constitute only six percent of the state population, yet 35% of those incarcerated in state prisons are African-Americans."

From her perspective, the problem isn't the fact that these prisoners have committed all of these crimes and victimized this many people. Instead, the problem according to Senator Baldwin seems to be that our Wisconsin criminal justice system is racist and white people just aren't represented enough in prisons. She yells at the rain yet offers no solution to the very real issue of high crime rates in several parts of the state. People that commit crimes are criminals, regardless of skin color. They must be held accountable for society's sake of protection and ensuring the prisoner pays their debt, and especially the victims who have often had their lives turned upside down or ended.

The criminal justice system is a very complex and nuanced system and cannot be reduced to the talking points of the left or protestor signs. It must be taken seriously, and we need to take a systematic look at reform. This should be done state by state, peering through the lens of public safety and not political talking points or activist slogans. A full review of laws and sentencing guidelines would be a great place to start. Common sense changes should be proposed and enacted. For example, the length of prison term shouldn't depend on which jurisdiction you live in. Some crimes have statutes of limitations while others do not. A woman brutally raped should not have to face a statute of limitations, her scars stay with her a lifetime, and the chance to prosecute her attacker should also stay open forever. Sexual Assault of a child should never carry a shorter sentence than such crimes as embezzlement and wire fraud. There are also backlogs at state crime labs around the nation. These facilities should be fully funded, and a victim should be able to have their case processed more quickly. The longer a criminal is on the street, the more danger for that victim and other potential victims.

Finally, we need a shift in attitude towards societal expectations. People have a right to be secure in their person, whether it is in their car, watching tv in their home, or walking down the street. A woman has a right to be safe whether she is walking to her car, having a drink with her friends, or out for a run. A child should be able to play at the park, walk home from school, or get loads of candy at Halloween without their family fearing some dirtbag is trying to prey on them. Far too many kids go to bed at night hurting because of this willingness to dismiss the crime of the criminal. And far too many women walk down that sidewalk in fear or cry silently because of this willingness to dismiss the criminal. Our society must do better and demand better. Crime shouldn't be a forgone conclusion, it is always a choice, and we need to teach better and expect better. That, Senator Baldwin, is the problem. A criminal is a criminal no matter their color, so let's have a real conversation, not just choose the racial boogeyman like the left does with every other issue.

Stacey Klein, US Senate Candidate

