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*Safeguard Children  
Stand Tough on Crime  
Preserve Agriculture  
Defend Constitution  
Protect Consumers  
Dignity for Elders*

(Little Rock, AR) Today Nate Steel, Democratic candidate for Attorney General, announced at his campaign headquarters a 7 Point Legislative Package to respond to Arkansas's prison overcrowding crisis.

"Our prisons are overcrowded, and we are letting too many violent criminals out of jail before they've served a full sentence. It's unacceptable," he said.

"Your top law enforcement officer must bring to the table specific ways to solve our current prison crisis," he added.

Steel places at the top of his agenda tougher child sex predator laws. He is proposing to end parole on all registered sex offenders and require special imprinting on a sex offender's driver's license.

"Arkansas must adopt a zero-tolerance approach to sex predators to keep Arkansas children safe," Steel proclaimed.

"I'll work closely with the Office of Child Support Enforcement to crack down on deadbeat parents by using modern computer technology to aggressively find and pursue collection against prison wages, gambling winnings, and tax refunds," Steel promised.

"Far too many children and single mothers have the tough choice to go on public assistance to pay for basic needs when court-ordered child support goes unpaid for years. It's a big problem for taxpayers when deadbeat parents ignore their legal obligations," he said.

Steel also wants truth in criminal sentencing and transparency of the Department of Corrections. "I'll work with the ADC to improve the public's understanding of the true gravity of our overcrowding crisis by making all information readily available online, including when sex offenders are released from prison," he said.

## **Nate Steel's Legislative Agenda Overview**

1. **Strengthen Child Sex Predator Laws.**
  - a. End parole for all Registered Sex Offenders.
  - b. Imprint drivers licenses with labels for Sex Offenders.
  
2. **Streamline Child Support Collections.**
  - a. Find Deadbeat Parents using up-to-date technology.
  - b. Collect prison wages, gambling winnings, and refunds.
  
3. **Stop the Pipeline to Prison.**
  - a. Support community-based drug treatment for juveniles.
  - b. Educate about the real cost of sending kids to prison.
  - c. Support Drug Courts in high drug volume areas.
  
4. **Create Criminal Justice Transparency.**
  - a. Publish all parole data to promote Truth in Sentencing.
  - b. Awareness of sex predators being released from jail.
  - c. Improve ADC website to give clear picture of all data.
  
5. **Amend the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to help Law Enforcement.**
  - a. Grant qualified law enforcement access to data.
  - b. Permit approved researchers to study data.
  
6. **Establish a Veteran's Advocacy Unit.**
  - a. Help veterans navigate complicated federal obstacles.
  - b. Work with VA to address healthcare backlog and federal government red tape.
  
7. **Improve Arkansas's business environment.**
  - a. Expand Cyber-Crimes Unit to fight hackers, identity thieves, and cyber-criminals.
  - b. Publish terms of all outside counsel contracts with AG Office, and curb reliance on costly outside counsel.
  - c. Encourage technology investment in Arkansas by cracking down on patent trolls and frivolous patent litigation.

## **Nate Steel's Specific Legislative Agenda**

As an experienced Prosecutor, I know firsthand how we can improve our criminal justice system. Today, we release too many criminals early from prison to make room for even more criminals. It's a [Revolving Prison Door](#), and it is unacceptable.

As your Attorney General, I promise to make wise use of taxpayer money across the board and to encourage your legislature to do the same. As one example, [Drug Treatment Courts](#) can affordably rehabilitate nonviolent drug offenders – allowing us to keep the violent criminals and child predators in jail, serving their full sentences.

As your next Attorney General, I will be a catalyst for substantial change on several important areas of Criminal and Juvenile Justice, and I have some ideas about Business Law, too.

### **End Parole for Sex Predators**

As part of my demand for Truth in Sentencing, I believe we must end parole eligibility for all sex offenders. I'm going to do everything possible to make sure that dangerous child predators understand that [Arkansas is a zero-tolerance jurisdiction](#). I tell you this: Sex Offenders need to flee the state like the rats they are, because we're going to end parole for sex offenders – going forward.

### **Sex Offender Registry - Driver's License Notification**

The laws already on the books prevent some registered sex offenders from getting too close to safe school zones, but I believe there are loopholes that must be fixed. With my legislation, I will close one of those loopholes by requiring the Department of Finance and Administration to prominently identify - on the driver's license for all sex offenders, their status as either a Level I, II, III or IV offender. This will make it far easier for school officials, police, and public officers to identify violations of our laws that are designed to promote safer schools. It will make it easier for employers to understand when sex offenders lie on job applications to get work at churches, schools, or child care areas.

### **Streamline Child Support Collections**

Our overcrowded prisons are causing many unintended problems. One such problem is that we are having a harder time putting deadbeat parents in jail because of criminal nonpayment of child support. With only limited bed space available in our current system, many children do not receive the financial support they need from deadbeat parents owing \$10,000 or more in back child support. It's costing our society plenty of money. Nationally, there is more than [\\$100 billion owed in unpaid child support](#), and nearly half of that is owed to

taxpayers supporting children on public assistance.

We must do better for Arkansas Children by making the system more streamlined. As Attorney General, I will help the Office of Child Support Enforcement by advocating for up-to-date technology, such as finding deadbeat parents through utility company or Internet records. We must be creative and collect back child support against prison wages, gambling winnings, and tax refunds.

### **Juvenile Justice Reform**

Did you know that Arkansas has the worst record in America when it comes to juvenile prescription drug abuse? High school dropouts also represent the majority among those incarcerated. Dropouts are more likely to be unemployed, dependent upon public assistance, earn less in the workforce, and end up in the criminal justice system.

We must improve our Juvenile Justice System if we are to have a long-term solution to our overcrowded prisons.

The [Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families](#) recently released a report on Juvenile Justice highlighting substantial problems facing our current System. We can't keep criminalizing our children or put them in what's commonly known as the *Prison Pipeline*. Once institutionalized, it's very hard for juveniles to get back on track.

Today we spend \$29 million on fewer than 500 kids who are committed to Juvenile facilities. We spend less than that on the remaining 10,000 children in our Juvenile Justice system, according to the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. If we invest in the future of our children, then we must do so wisely and on things that work.

I believe children must be held accountable, taking responsibility for the bad actions, and make amends to avoid a repeat problem.

We must do all we can to slow the flow of our young people into the Prison Pipeline if we are going to reduce our long term prison *overcrowding crisis*. [It's also the right thing to do.](#)

Under my plan, I will encourage juvenile justice programs that make good financial sense - like the ones used by Benton, Washington, and Madison County Juvenile Justice Courts. There, judges search out alternate ways to avoid juvenile detention and use evidence-based assessments to revisit the plan to make sure it is working.

I want Juvenile Judges across the state to have realistic treatment options. I will be known as a solid supporter of Juvenile Court.

## **Support Drug Courts**

One critical part of my legislative package is to support Drug Treatment Courts in areas where we have bad rates of drug abuse. These specialized treatment-based programs are proven to work, and for far less money than housing prisoners in our overcrowded system. Drug Treatment Courts offer a substantial savings when compared to the cost of incarceration.

This is from the 2014 AR Drug Courts Report: “Budget cuts reduced the treatment funding for drug court participants to \$500,000 for 2013, compared to \$1.5 million and \$3 million in previous years. This amount is disbursed among all drug courts statewide. The legislature also declined to provide any funding for new drug court programs. It approved five more locations for new drug court programs in 2011, but these programs have yet to be funded.”

2012 Arkansas data indicates that incarceration costs are \$61.83 (ADC) per person per day and \$58.21 (ACC) per person per day, while drug court costs are merely \$14.40 per person per day.

## **Criminal Justice Transparency**

I believe it's time our prison sentencing system got a very large dose of sunshine. Working with the legislature, I will make sure our laws promote full transparency.

For example, we must make available to the public all sentencing regimes that ADC and the Department of Community Corrections use to release all criminals. I want you to have immediate access to specific data for all criminals being released. We can do that using a public website that must be straightforward and easy to use. It's the first step towards Truth in Sentencing. I will work with ADC to get this accomplished.

Right now, we have some systems in place, such as the Arkansas VINE program. That's a free automated hotline that provides crime victims with information. What I'm talking about is much larger.

When any convict is released from prison, the public have the right to know his or her original sentence, actual sentence, and the average time served for various offenses. I want these criminal records open for all to see. Victims and families need to know the truth behind our Criminal Justice System. I want the public and the press to have the tools they need to make a candid and truthful review of the situation of our prisons, including large disparities in sentencing and criminal justice spending.

I want us to offer a one-stop location for the ADC Annual report, the Parole Board Annual report, a direct connection to all data already shown in the Arkansas Victim Notification Network, integration with the ADC Inmate Search to have far more information, such as the original sentence, actual sentence, average time served. Most importantly we need to have full understanding of the ADC

sentencing regimes.

As a prosecutor, I firmly believe in the need to have Truth in Sentencing. It's time the press, the public, and researchers have full access to all the information they need in one place to grasp just how many violent criminals our state is letting out of jail too early.

### **Prescription Drug Monitoring Program – Amended.**

When it comes to juvenile prescription drug abuse, and adult drug abuse as well, we need to make some changes in the Arkansas's Electronic Prescription Monitoring Program, as authorized in 2011 by Arkansas State Legislature Act 304.

As your Attorney General, I will enhance our Prescription Monitoring Program by giving specific Law Enforcement professionals the access they need. Other states allow law enforcement and their Attorney General's Office access to the program, but Arkansas does not.

We can't make much progress on our prescription drug epidemic without law enforcement's participation. Let's make the most out of an existing law in a way that won't be an added burden on the pharmacies. Coupled with the Cyber-crimes unit, I believe we can make some real progress.

### **Establish a Veteran's Advocacy Unit**

Something that is directly correlated to the issue of mental health is the issue of veteran advocacy. It is shameful that our society would ask so much of our soldiers yet give them so little in return.

When they are done overseas – their unemployment rate is far higher than our national averages. Their brain injuries and mental health issues – including PTSD, go untreated.

I will establish a "Veteran's Advocacy Unit" in the AG's office. The reason for Veterans' Courts is that there is a disproportionately high number of Veterans being pulled into the criminal justice system. Assigning lawyers and other personnel to help Vets navigate the legal red tape of the VA and other State opportunities, with the end goal to reduce prison overcrowding and provide good constituency service for our nation's heroes.

### **Business Law Modifications and New Laws**

In the area of business law, I have three proposals to help make your government more open for business.

#### *Cyber-Crimes Unit – Expand to Credit Card/Identity Theft*

As your Attorney General, I believe it's important that we increase the scope of responsibilities of our Cyber-Crimes unit. Right now, we're doing a good job working with federal, state, and local law enforcement to crack down on child predators. We now must serve as a vital law enforcement element by tracking down data breaches, computer hacking, stopping online scams, and helping curb bank information theft. Credit card fraud and identity theft occupies national headlines, and Arkansas can do something about it – now.

We can modify Arkansas law at Title 4, Subchapter 7 (Consumer Protection). The "Consumer Protection Against Spyware Act" could be modified, amended, or enhanced to include this new authorization.

#### *Outside Law Firm Transparency – Outside Counsel*

I will make all contracts for outside legal services public, including all compensation amounts. Sometimes it is a better use of taxpayer money to engage outside counsel who sometimes work on a contingency fee, at no cost to the taxpayers. These contracts need to be open for the public and press review. I will also submit all settlement monies from these contingency fee cases to the legislature for appropriation, unless a court order says otherwise.

#### *Unfair Business Practices – Patent Trolls*

We must respond to Bad Faith Patent Litigation, known as Patent Trolls. To do this, I would ask the legislature to amend the Unfair Trade Practices Act to curb the rampant use of hollow patent threats against Arkansas businesses. Many other states have already addressed the issue, but we need to send a clear message that Arkansas is not a place where people can threaten suit on a patent without having lawful basis.

### **Conclusion**

My opponent said there is no need for the Attorney General's office to have a legislative package for this upcoming session. Because your legislature convenes every other year, that's a long time for the many problems I've mentioned to go without resolution. We can't look to a national agenda for marching orders. We must confront the substantial problems we have here at home in order to preserve our quality and way of life.

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