

Deinstitutionalization of mental health hospitals began with the implementation of the *Lanterman-Petris-Short Act* in California, with all other states following suit by the early 1990s.⁷

Congress passes the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act* of 1974, which prevents youth involvement in the justice system through a unified national program. It also establishes the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.³

CNN begins 24/7 news coverage, leading to the increase of media influencing policy.⁶

The Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 permits policing agencies to seize assets, such as homes, cars and personal finances, incurred following drug-related arrests. Seized property was often used by police departments to buy vehicles, buildings, equipment and to run operations.¹⁵

During an anti-drug tour, First Lady Nancy Reagan first uses the phrase “Just say no,” when asked by a little girl what to do if someone offers her drugs. By 1988, 12,000 schools nationwide adopt the slogan.¹¹

The GEO Group, originally Wackenhut Corporation, incorporates, creating a multi-national private prison company—the second largest of its kind to operate in the United States.¹⁹

The American Bail Coalition is formed to promote the use of for-profit commercial bail bondsmen in the criminal justice system.²⁶

Two Columbine, Colorado, high school students shoot and kill 12 students, a teacher and injure several others before committing suicide. The massacre sparked controversy over school safety, ushering metal detectors and school resource officers into many schools.³⁴

In *Atkins v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that the death penalty for mentally retarded individuals is a Constitutional violation.³⁸

In *Ewing v. California*, the U.S. Supreme Court upholds “three strikes” laws.³⁹

New York state lawmakers eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for first-time drug offenders, effectively dismantling the 36-year-old Rockefeller drug laws.⁴⁴

In *United States v. Booker*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that when imposing a sentence, federal judges must only consider the facts admitted or proven beyond a reasonable doubt at trial. This ended judges' ability to impose harsher sentences due to federal sentencing guidelines.⁴⁰

Jena High School in Louisiana makes major headlines over a prosecutor allegedly targeting students on racial grounds.⁴¹ The *Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006* expands sex offender registries and increases federal punishments for crime against children.⁴²

A school shooting in Sandy Hook, Connecticut has renewed the gun control debate with the NRA pushing pro-policing and pro-gun policies while former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, victim of the 2011 Tucson, AZ, shooting announces the formation of a political action committee, Americans for Responsible Solutions, to counteract the influence of the gun lobby.

In *Miller v. Alabama*, the Supreme Court ruled that juveniles convicted of murder cannot be sentenced to life in prison without parole.⁴⁸

The fatal shooting of teenager Trayvon Martin by a local vigilante sparked a national outcry against potentially racist motivations in the way the case was handled and led to a re-examination of Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law, a gun policy promoted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

During the November elections, voters in state elections in Colorado and Washington state support the legalization of marijuana while Massachusetts voters allowed for the use of medical marijuana. California revised its “three strikes” law so that “third strike” misdemeanors do not qualify for a 25-to-life sentence.

President Bush signs the *Second Chance Act of 2007*, which increases the programs that people have access to in prison and reforms the re-entry process to give those released a second chance at success.⁴³

The Great Recession hits U.S. financial markets leading to government bail outs of major companies in the banking and automobile industries. State budgets are strained across the nation causing a re-examination of correctional spending.

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