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CONTACT:

press@coalitionforpublicsafety.org

Leading Conservative, Progressive Groups Join Forces to Launch Nation's Largest Coalition Aimed at Comprehensive Criminal Justice Reform

'Coalition for Public Safety' to Pursue Aggressive Effort to Reform System at Federal, State, Local Levels

Washington, D.C. – Today, a new coalition of the nation's most prominent conservative and progressive organizations has formed to pursue an aggressive criminal justice reform effort. The Coalition for Public Safety will be the largest national effort working to make our criminal justice system smarter, fairer, and more cost effective at the federal, state, and local level. Together, these organizations reach tens of millions of Americans seeking commonsense reform, and will work to build consensus around comprehensive efforts that are designed to address some of the most pressing issues facing the nation's criminal justice system.

The Coalition's partners include the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Americans for Tax Reform, the Center for American Progress, the Faith & Freedom Coalition, FreedomWorks, the Leadership Conference Education Fund, and Right on Crime.

The Coalition is being funded by individuals and foundations with a broad spectrum of interests, who have come together to jointly pursue broad criminal justice reform. Supporters include Laura and John Arnold, Koch Industries, Inc., the Ford Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Christine Leonard, former associate director of legislative affairs in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy for the Obama administration and director of the Washington, D.C. office of the Vera Institute for Justice, will serve as the Coalition's executive director.

"Our justice system needs reform. It's simply too complicated, too big, and too expensive – and all Americans are picking up that tab," said **Christine Leonard**, Executive Director of the Coalition. "We've brought together an amazing Coalition of prominent and diverse organizations from across the aisle to help solve the issues

facing our criminal justice system. It's inspirational to see such bipartisan support for reform, and I look forward to working with all of our partners."

The Coalition for Public Safety will build consensus around the need for reform through educational events, national outreach, and media. The Coalition will work across the political spectrum to pursue a comprehensive set of federal, state, and local criminal justice reforms that will reduce jail and prison populations and associated costs, end the systemic problem of over-criminalization and over-incarceration – particularly of low-income communities and communities of color, ensure swift and fair outcomes for both the accused and the victims, and make communities safer by reducing recidivism and breaking down barriers faced by those returning home after detention or incarceration.

For more information on the Coalition, please visit www.coalitionforpublicsafety.org.

The Need for Reform

The United States is home to 5 percent of the world's population but makes up 25 percent of the world's prison population – and sixty percent of those in prison are racial and ethnic minorities. Over the last two decades, the federal prison population has increased an astounding 790 percent – sixty percent of those currently incarcerated in federal prisons are non-violent offenders – costing the American people \$80 billion per year.

Between 70 million and 100 million – or 1 in 3 of all Americans – now have a criminal record, which carries lifelong barriers that can block successful re-entry and participation in society because of restrictions on employment, housing, and voting. Mass incarceration contributes to a cycle of poverty that traps individuals, families, and entire communities for generations.

Coalition for Public Safety Partners

"Collusion between the Democratic and Republican parties in being 'tough on crime' led to America's over-incarceration catastrophe and it will take bipartisan consensus to dismantle a system that has been disastrous to families, communities and government budgets. We know trying to arrest our way out of every social problem doesn't work, so we have to bring together all parts of our society and work for solutions."

– Anthony D. Romero, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union

"Americans for Tax Reform is committed to working with all political tendencies to reform our criminal justice system to reduce the financial costs it imposes on taxpayers and the human costs inflicted on the families and communities of both offenders and the victims of crime. We should measure success by how few crimes

are committed, how few crimes go unpunished, not by the amount of tax dollars spent on prisons or the number of American citizens incarcerated.”

- Grover Norquist, President, Americans for Tax Reform

“CAP is excited to be a part of this diverse Coalition to tackle this most pressing issue – the need for comprehensive criminal justice reform at the federal, state and local level. This Coalition demonstrates the growing bipartisan moment around criminal justice reform, and the urgency of this issue makes it important to see past any divisions in the fight to make progress. We all realize that the time to act is now – we are losing too many people, families and communities – particularly communities of color – to a broken system. We look forward to collaborating across ideological lines on innovative solutions to this nationwide problem.”

- Neera Tanden, President, Center for American Progress

“The Faith & Freedom Coalition is honored to join this historic Coalition focused on restoring an American justice system badly in need of smart reform. Our nation deserves a justice system that protects the public, reduces crime and its cost to taxpayers, and provides a pathway to rehabilitation for those who choose to take it, so that individuals, families, and communities can be whole. We look forward to the Coalition for Public Safety becoming a beacon for honest conversation and real policy reform on one of the most important, but least talked about issues in American public life.”

- Timothy Head, Executive Director, Faith & Freedom Coalition

“FreedomWorks is thrilled to be a part of this unique transpartisan Coalition. For decades, politicians have appeared to be 'tough on crime' by passing onerous laws that trap people in a horribly broken criminal justice system. These bad policies have led to the United States having the highest incarceration rate in the world. This is not only fiscally unsustainable, it's morally wrong. We look forward to promoting meaningful and responsible criminal justice reforms that will bring families back together, restore our civil liberties, and reduce the number of nonviolent offenders in our prison system.”

- Matt Kibbe, President and CEO of FreedomWorks

“We are proud to join a Coalition that makes clear once and for all that reform of the criminal justice system is a national priority, not a partisan issue. We cannot incarcerate our way to safety. It is time for all Americans of conscience to work together to end 30 years of unjust 'tough on crime' policies that have disproportionately affected African American, Latino, and low-income communities.”

- Wade Henderson, President and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund

“There are very real differences between many of the groups that have come together to form the Coalition for Public Safety. While we disagree with some of our partners on much concerning the proper function of government, we embrace the

opportunity to work together to improve the nation's criminal justice system through reforms that reduce crime, empower victims, and protect taxpayers.

Most importantly, Right on Crime is happy to join a coalition that understands that improving public safety is the main reason we must reform the criminal justice system. America's founders understood that the primary role of government was to ensure ordered liberty. They knew that, without public safety, there was no room for a flourishing civil society.

To that end, we recognize that our country cannot continue to have a system in which non-violent offenders emerge from prisons more dangerous than they were when they entered. It is especially perverse that Americans pay so much of their hard-earned tax dollars for such a failing system.

We look forward to finding areas of consensus to ensure that our corrections system makes America safer."

—**Marc Levin, Policy Director, Right on Crime**

Coalition for Public Safety Supporters

"We strongly believe that the time is ripe for key reforms in criminal justice. There is growing momentum and consensus around a number of policy solutions – from civil asset forfeiture to sentencing. This bipartisan Coalition will channel the momentum to advance federal and state policies that create a fairer, more effective and cost-efficient system. We are honored to be part of the Coalition."

– **Laura and John Arnold**

"Our entire criminal justice system has become punitive rather than rehabilitative to the detriment of our democracy. What's clear is that America's pattern of mass incarceration is bad for the country, terrible for communities, and devastating for individuals. I believe it is imperative to find common ground on issues of reform while continuing to push for the restoration of dignity and justice for the system and everyone involved."

– **Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation**

"The Coalition for Public Safety is an opportunity for all of us to set aside ideological and political beliefs and unite on an issue that matters to so many Americans. Koch is pleased to be a supporter of this diverse Coalition. We look forward to helping find and implement solutions that will improve our criminal justice system and better protect all Americans' rights, particularly the most disadvantaged."

– **Mark V. Holden, General Counsel, Koch Industries, Inc.**

"The Coalition and its partners can be a tremendous accelerant of positive change. It is time to model the kind of pragmatic, non-ideological, 'all hands on deck' collaboration needed to fix our nation's toughest problems and to demonstrate that people with different, strongly-held views can come together

around important issues that demand extraordinary collective action—starting with our criminal justice system. Its continuing damage to individuals and society challenges core American values of justice, fairness, and equality.”

- *Julia Stasch, President, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*

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