

TAKING A BIGGER CUT

In fiscal year 2007, an estimated 1 in every 15 state general fund dollars was spent on corrections.

	Corrections as a percentage of total general fund expenditures, 2007	1987-2007 percentage point change
Oregon	10.9%	+4.6
Florida	9.3%	+3.6
Vermont	9.3%	+5.2
Colorado	8.8%	+5.1
California	8.6%	+3.8
Texas	8.6%	+4.2
Arizona	8.5%	+0.8
Montana	8.3%	+2.4
Oklahoma	7.8%	+4.1
Arkansas	7.7%	+5.1
Maryland	7.6%	-1.5
Louisiana	7.5%	+1.7
Missouri	7.4%	+3.7
Delaware	7.1%	+1.9
Ohio	7.0%	+2.5
South Dakota	7.0%	+3.1
Idaho	6.9%	+3.8
Utah	6.9%	+2.5
South Carolina	6.7%	+0.8
Virginia	6.7%	-8.1
Wisconsin	6.7%	+4.0
New Hampshire	6.6%	+2.5
Nevada	6.4%	-2.1
Pennsylvania	6.2%	+4.1
Iowa	5.9%	+2.6
Washington	5.9%	+2.4
North Carolina	5.7%	+0.9
Kansas	5.6%	+1.3
Tennessee	5.6%	-2.0
Georgia	5.4%	-0.5
Mississippi	5.4%	+1.5
Alaska	5.3%	+2.0
Indiana	5.3%	+0.3
North Dakota	5.3%	+3.7
Illinois	5.2%	+0.8
Kentucky	5.2%	+1.8
Nebraska	5.2%	+1.1
Massachusetts	5.1%	+1.9
New York	5.1%	-2.0
New Jersey	4.9%	+0.7
Rhode Island	4.9%	+1.4
West Virginia	4.6%	+3.3
Connecticut	4.4%	+2.0
New Mexico	4.2%	-0.5
Maine	4.1%	+0.4
Wyoming	4.0%	+0.1
Hawaii	3.8%	+1.3
Minnesota	2.7%	+1.0
Alabama	2.6%	-2.4
National average	6.8%	+1.8

States in bold saw a decrease in the percentage of their general fund dedicated to corrections.

SOURCE: National Association of State Budget Officers, "State Expenditure Report" series; Percentage point increases are based on a reanalysis of data in this series.

NOTE: Michigan does not have a comparable figure because of the state's general fund definition. See Jurisdictional Notes.

support obligations managed to make at least partial payments. Overall, the average prisoner paid only \$206 over the previous year for child support obligations, while the average amount paid by parolees was \$1,538—more than seven times as much.²²

In Florida, meanwhile, statistics show that offenders under supervision in the community make substantial restitution payments to victims. In FY 2004-2005, one study showed, Florida probationers paid more than \$37.3 million in restitution under mandatory financial obligation agreements established at the onset of their supervision.²³

Crowding Out Other Priorities

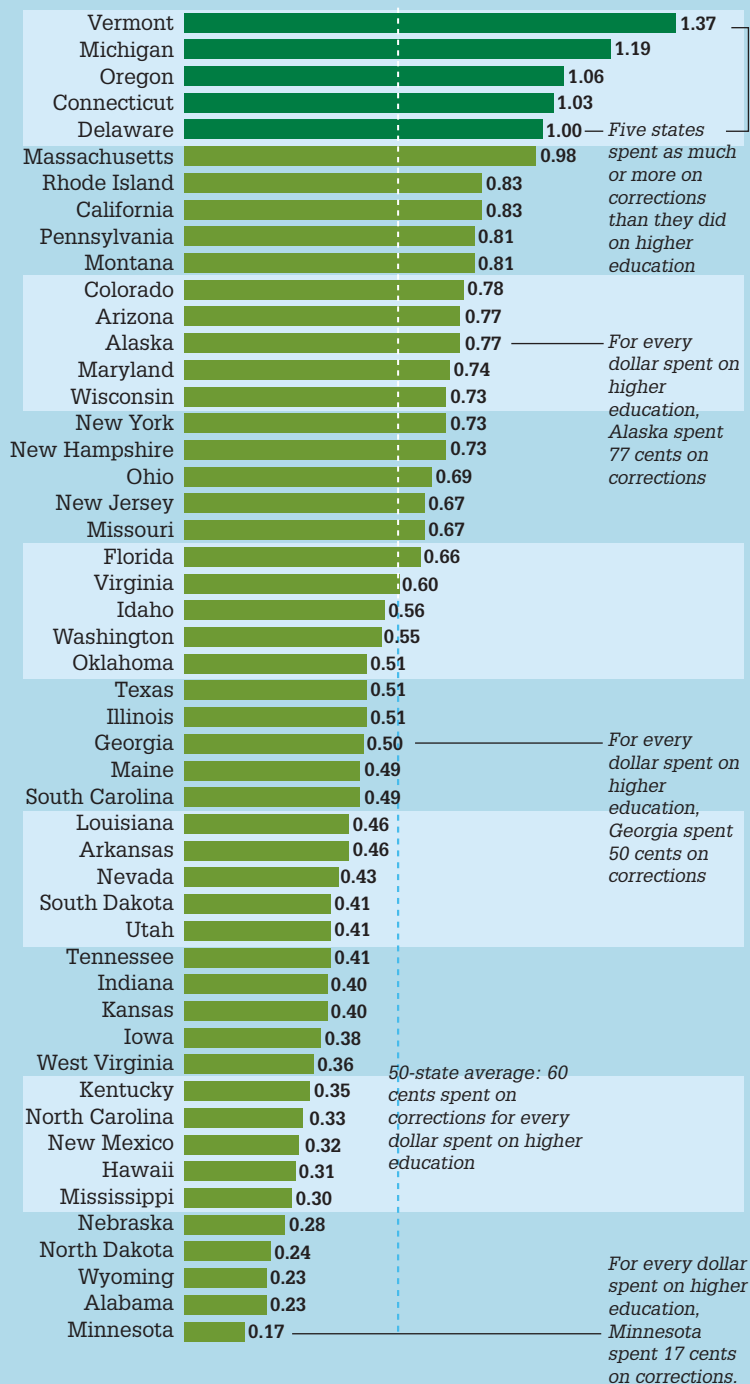
Year by year, corrections budgets are consuming an ever larger chunk of state general funds, leaving less and less in the pot for other needs. Collectively, correctional agencies now consume 6.8 percent of state general funds, 2007 data show.²⁴ That means one in every 15 dollars in the states' main pool of discretionary money goes to corrections. Considering all types of funds, corrections had the second fastest rate of growth in FY 2006. With a 9.2 percent jump, it trailed transportation but outpaced increases in spending on education and Medicaid.²⁵

Some states spend an even larger proportion of their budgets on corrections. Oregon, for example, directed one in every 10 dollars to corrections, while Florida and Vermont spent one in 11. Minnesota and Alabama are at the other extreme, spending less than 3 percent of

MAKING DECISIONS WHERE TO SPEND

While states don't necessarily choose between higher education and corrections, a dollar spent in one area is unavailable for another.

Ratio of corrections to higher education spending, 2007



SOURCE: Reanalysis of data presented in the National Association of State Budget Officers, "State Expenditure Report" series

Corrections spending also competes with the funding many states want to devote to early childhood education, one of the most proven crime prevention strategies. Research shows that attending a high-quality pre-kindergarten influences a child's success both in school and in life. One rigorous study that followed severely disadvantaged children into adulthood showed that participation in pre-kindergarten dramatically reduced participation in juvenile and adult crime, and increased high school graduation, employment and earnings, with a total benefit-cost ratio of 16 to 1.²⁶

Backed with such evidence of success, states have substantially increased support for high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten. New state pre-k funding exceeded \$525 million in FY 2008, an increase of more than 12 percent over FY07 expenditures, bringing total state investments in early education across the country to \$4.8 billion.²⁷

Increasingly, state policy makers are finding that a dollar spent for pre-k classes now can forestall many more dollars for prison beds down the road.

"It's not good public policy to take all of these taxpayer dollars at a very tough time, and invest it in the prison system when we ought to be investing it in the things that are going to transform the economy, like education and diversifying the economy."

MI Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D)
Associated Press
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