

2016 Massachusetts Sheriff Elections

*Your chance to influence mass incarceration
and support criminal justice reforms!*

County sheriffs oversee the incarceration of over half of all prisoners in Massachusetts. While they may not create the laws or prosecution policies that lead to mass incarceration, their practices have a direct effect on prisoners, their families and taxpayers at the cost of \$35 – \$60,000+/year for each prisoner. Except for Nantucket County, sheriffs operate:

- County houses of correction (HOC's), which are county prisons for people who have been convicted and sentenced for up to 2½ years of incarceration;
- County jails, for people who have been accused of a crime but can't make bail or the courts have ordered them held until trial (sometimes called "pre-trial detainees").
- Some sheriffs also get paid to house state prisoners (typically those sentenced to 2½ years or longer, who would otherwise be incarcerated in a state prison) or people accused of violating federal immigration laws. Jails and HOCs are often in the same building.

THE NEXT SIX YEARS. This fall, all Massachusetts sheriffs are up for election/re-election for six-year terms. This gives sheriffs the chance to greatly affect the lives of those under their control, for better or worse. This gives YOU the chance to decide who will hold this important office!

- In four counties, the sheriff is retiring and a new sheriff will be elected: Dukes, Essex, Hampden and Hampshire;
- In four counties, the sheriff is running for re-election against at least one challenger: Barnstable, Middlesex, Plymouth and Suffolk;
- In six counties, the sheriff is running for re-election unopposed: Berkshire, Bristol, Franklin, Nantucket, Norfolk and Worcester.

As elected officials, sheriffs are not subject to direct oversight by any state agency or official. For the most part, only voters can hold them accountable. Some sheriffs favor positive policies and innovation, while others have policies that may be contrary to your views on how prisoners should be treated and may resist needed changes.

WHAT'S AT STAKE? Find out where your county's sheriff/candidates stand on the issues, even if your sheriff is running unopposed. Organize or take part in candidate forums to learn about:

- Educational & job training opportunities
- Prisoner medical care
- Fees charged to prisoners
- Pre-release programs
- Where & how women prisoners are held
- Willingness to track data
- Substance use/mental health programs
- Solitary confinement
- Employee hiring and training
- Ability of family & friends to visit prisoners
- Pregnant & post-partum women prisoners
- Willingness to issue public reports

For information about the Ad Hoc Coalition to Stop New Jails in Massachusetts, please contact lois@realcostofprisons.org.