

Recommendations on S. 573 and H.R. 1886

The National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2017

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Submitted by SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics¹

Background:

- The National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2017 would establish a 14-member, bipartisan National Criminal Justice Commission made up of Presidential and Congressional appointees, including experts on law enforcement, criminal justice, victims' rights, civil liberties and social services.
- Members of the Commission would be charged with undertaking an 18-month review of the nation's criminal justice system, including Federal, State, local, and tribal governments' criminal justice costs, practices, and policies.

SEARCH Position:

- SEARCH applauds the authors of the National Criminal Justice Commission Act, who have encouraged a comprehensive review of the nation's criminal justice system. Such a review has not been accomplished since 1965.
- As a comprehensive review is debated, SEARCH encourages Members of Congress to consider that over the past 50 years, one of the most significant changes that has impacted criminal justice policy and practices has been the application of information sharing and identification technologies.
 - Justice agencies maintain records of people and events that they process within the scope of their responsibility. These records must be shared with other agencies with appropriate privacy and civil liberties safeguards, to improve the delivery and administration of justice. Some of these records are components of the official "criminal history record," and some are not - yet all are important to effectively administer justice and ensure public safety.
 - Preventing, investigating, and prosecuting criminal and terrorist activity, and protecting the public require that information and intelligence be available to decision-makers in a manner that is responsible, seamless, and secure.
 - The safety of officers and other justice practitioners requires situational awareness. That means immediate access to complete and accurate information about subjects, locations, and other environmental factors.
 - Effectively managing convicted offenders (whether incarcerated or on probation) requires robust information about program participation, responsiveness to substance abuse and mental health treatments, and other initiatives aimed at reducing the likelihood of re-offending. Coordinated management of an offender's rehabilitation is critical to reducing recidivism-and this is impossible without the effective cross-agency sharing of information.

SEARCH Recommendations:

- SEARCH recommends the National Criminal Justice Commission's review include an examination of the impact of justice information and identification technologies, including the challenges and benefits of integrated information sharing systems, interoperability, and the sharing of information among and between criminal justice agencies, other first responders, and non-criminal justice organizations.
- SEARCH also recommends that the National Criminal Justice Commission include an individual with a distinguished reputation for expertise, knowledge, and experience in criminal justice information sharing and identification technology, interoperability, privacy, and security.

If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Nee (melissa@search.org).

¹ SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, is a nonprofit organization governed by a Membership Group of governor appointees from the States and territories. SEARCH has over 46 years of experience supporting the information sharing, interoperability, communications, information technology, high-tech crime investigative, and criminal records systems needs of State, local, and tribal justice and public safety agencies and practitioners nationwide.