Who is Initiate Justice?

Initiate Justice is an organization led by people whose lives have been impacted by the California prison system - people who are currently inside, formerly incarcerated, or those who have loved ones inside. We organize, advocate, and build together. We work to make statewide policy change, build relationships with state senators and assemblymembers, and build the world we want to live in. We are 45,000+ Inside Members (like you!), 300+ Inside Organizers, 200+ Outside Organizers, and members and volunteers across California.

Get your loved ones involved, too!

We have an exciting 2023 bill package and we need as many people to join us to successfully pass all our bills - your loved ones can join us on the outside, while you help us on the inside!

To stay up-to-date with our work, your loved one can sign up for our email list by visiting: www.TinyUrl.com/JoinIJ

Press Conference at the Capitol for ACA 4

We launched ACA 4 with a Press Conference at the Capitol, featuring speakers like our Executive Director, and former Inside Organizers, David C. and Thanh T. We shared how much civic engagement means to our members, based on surveys and what we've read from you. It is always a powerful experience to mobilize and advocate with you. Learn more about the bill on page 5.

Journal timeline:

We receive thousands of letters every few months, please be patient with responses to mail.

Every 4th journal of the year (around October of every year) will have criminal justice reform bills not sponsored by IJ that were signed into law by the Governor. You will be informed of those bills then.

What’s inside?

- Get Your Loved Ones Involved, too! - Pg 1
- What is a Legislative Letter of Support? - Pg 2
- Policy Corner: Details our 2023 Legislative Package - Pg 5 & 6

GET YOUR LOVED ONES INVOLVED, TOO!

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Abolition is for Everybody

Our podcast, *abolition is for everybody*, just launched season three! It talks all about the media’s part in incarceration and carceral thinking. It explores ways we can take part in representing our own stories, and ways that we can learn to be diligent when taking in news, TV, and even books. We’ll share some snippets with you throughout the year, or your loved ones can access transcripts to send by visiting InitiateJustice.org/podcast.

“Democracy Needs Everyone”
- Juan H., Inside Organizer

California Proposition 17 (better known as Prop 17) was included on the ballot during California’s statewide elections on November 3, 2020, and passed as one of the most successful propositions in California history, with nearly 10 million “Yes” votes.

At the time, Prop 17 restored voting rights to more than 51,000 people on parole, and has provided the right to vote to every CA citizen who came home on parole since.

The idea for Prop 17 began behind the walls of San Quentin State Prison. **Rahsaan Thomas, an Initiate Justice former Inside Organizer**, told us that if we wanted to build the political power of impacted people, we had to start with giving people a political voice, the right to vote.

Today, Rahsaan is home, still on our Board of Directors, and we’re organizing again-- this time, so everyone inside CA prisons can get back the right to vote.

How do I register to vote? Upon release from prison, you can find a voter registration card at most US Post Offices and public libraries. You can call the Secretary of State’s voter hotline at 1-800-345-VOTE (8683) to have a voter register card mailed to you or register online at [www.RegisterToVote.ca.gov](http://www.RegisterToVote.ca.gov).

How To Submit Your Art to Initiate Justice

1. Mail your work to our P.O. Box and write “Attn: Artwork”
2. Do not send anything you need back. **We cannot send anything back.**

By mailing in artwork, addressed to Attn: Artwork, you are giving Initiate Justice permission to use your material in whatever way most benefits the movement. Usually, this means participation in *The Inside Journal* or inclusion in social media or fundraising efforts.

What is a Legislative Letter of Support?

A Legislative Letter of Support is a short letter that goes to your representatives and lets them know that you support, or don’t support, a bill.

It also tells them a few reasons why you feel how you do, including any personal stories that show how it would impact yourself, your family, or your community.

Representatives use these letters to get an idea for how their constituency feels about the bill. They use them to make decisions, often counting them up to see how many people are on either side. This is why we need as many of you as possible to write these letters!

The personal stories included make a big impact.

And right now, we have the opportunity to let representatives know why ACA 4 (see more on page 5) is important to us! Write whatever and however you feel comfortable. What’s important is that we show representatives just how many of us want to #FreeTheVote!

As an Inside Member, this is an important way to stay involved in the legislative process—so **take action**!
Initiate Justice’s Inside Membership Department is in charge of making sure Inside Members (like you!) are informed on our co-sponsored bills and our various advocacy efforts.

With The Inside Journal, our goal is to make sure you get to stay a part of the movement towards freedom through advocacy efforts. One example is Legislative Letters of Support, where your letters and your stories help bills get passed! (See Page 2.) Another is The ART Gallery where your art and stories help us change people’s perceptions of prison, and also raise money for more advocacy efforts.

Currently, as an Inside Member of Initiate Justice, you are part of a membership that includes over half of the incarcerated population in CA’s state prisons. That’s powerful!

We thank you for your commitment to end incarceration, and for trusting us.

For us, that huge community also means a lot of mail! We pick up stacks and stacks every single day, and read every single letter.

Thank you for helping us make that possible.

Wellness Corner: Write a blessing!

It can be a blessing for you, the world, or someone else. It can be based in faith, nature, hope for the future, or whatever you want. Try to think of really tiny things. What is the tiniest thing you’ve ever felt blessed by?
Initiate Justice is here to help you build your political power, with the goal of helping you and everyone inside come home and to create a new society based on true justice. One part of justice is consent - that people should have the choice to agree to engage in a conversation or activity voluntarily. Initiate Justice receives many amazing letters from you, our Inside Members, but we have also been receiving letters with lewd, sexual, or romantic content directed towards our staff, our Outside Organizers, and our Outside Members and volunteers. All the photos in the Inside Journal are meant to build community with you as a member, but people engaging in IJ’s work on the outside are not part of IJ in order to penpal or start a romantic relationship. We ask that you please keep your letters on topic to your liberation, power building, education, and political issues, and not romance or sexual comments. Thank you.
This constitutional amendment will allow currently incarcerated people in California prisons to vote. If the constitutional amendment passes the Legislature, it will then be sent to the voters to decide on the November 2024 ballot.

Initiate Justice has made voting rights a priority for several years. In order to build a powerful political movement to end mass incarceration, we must ensure people in prison can vote. Free the Vote!

An ACA, is an Assembly Constitutional Amendment. When introduced, these bills propose an amendment, or change, to the state Constitution. These bills then have to pass both houses of the Legislature (the Assembly and Senate) with a 2/3rds majority vote to qualify on the statewide ballot as propositions. Once on the ballot, California voters must approve the proposition by a simple majority in order to pass. This process takes at least two years.

A legislative bill is a proposed law change introduced by either an Assemblymember or Senator. Once introduced, bills have to pass both the Assembly and Senate before they are then sent to the governor to sign or veto (not pass). See the included Legislative Process to guide you.

New Legislation

ACA 4 (Bryan): Voting Rights in Prison

This constitutional amendment will allow currently incarcerated people in California prisons to vote. If the constitutional amendment passes the Legislature, it will then be sent to the voters to decide on the November 2024 ballot.

Initiate Justice has made voting rights a priority for several years. In order to build a powerful political movement to end mass incarceration, we must ensure people in prison can vote. Free the Vote!

Keep in Mind!

Every year, there are thousands of bills introduced, so bill numbers are recycled for every two-year legislative cycle. Let’s say you have a bill introduced in 2022 as AB 123 regarding a specific issue. You can have another bill introduced in 2023 with the same number, yet about a completely different issue! That is why it is important to look at the author, bill title, and introduction year if you have them available.

For example, SB 81 (Skinner) was introduced in 2021 to give judges more discretion to strike enhancements at sentencing. This year in 2023, Initiate Justice is working on SB 81 (Becker) to change parts of the Board of Parole Hearing process. The bill number is the same, but the author, bill title, and introduction year are different!
NEW LEGISLATION

AB 60 (Bryan): Restorative Justice

This bill will notify victims of available restorative justice programs in their counties.

NEW LEGISLATION

AB 544 (Bryan): Voting in Jail

This bill will establish polling centers in county jails and require county jails to provide voter registration forms to eligible incarcerated voters.

NEW LEGISLATION

AB 1310 (McKinnor): Equal Chance Act

This bill will allow a person who was convicted of firearm enhancements (Penal Code sections 12022.5 or 12022.53) to petition the court for resentencing. The bill will require the court to have a presumption in favor of resentencing, which may only be overcome if a court finds the defendant is an unreasonable risk of danger to public safety. The bill will also require the court to appoint counsel for the hearing. A previous bill, SB 620 (Bradford) allowed judges to strike enhancements at sentencing, but it was not retroactive. This bill is trying to make it fully retroactive.

NEW LEGISLATION

AB 1186 (Bonta): Youth Restitution

This bill will replace youth restitution with a more sustainable and accessible system of compensation for crime survivors by ensuring timely payments from the California Victim Compensation Board while holding youth accountable in appropriate ways that do not involve them paying money. Instead, youth will participate in restorative justice conferences, perform community service, or be connected to job opportunities.

Update on AB 256 (Kalra): The Racial Justice Act 4 All Implementation

Currently, there is no update on AB 256 (Kalra). We currently do not have the statistical data but we will continue to provide updates on the implementation of this bill via The Inside Journal.

As a reminder, there is phased-in retroactivity so only people sentenced to death or facing deportation will be eligible this year, while everyone else will have eligibility starting in 2024.

January 1, 2023
individuals facing deportation or sentenced to death.

January 1, 2024
individuals incarcerated for a felony.

January 1, 2025
others with a felony conviction entered after 2015.

January 1, 2026
all others with a felony conviction.

Tip: Keep the included Legislative Process with you, so you know where we are every time you receive an update from us through The Inside Journal! Currently, we’re at the very beginning of the process!