



November 2024 Edition

the inside journal

The Inside Journal shares news about California state laws, CDCR policies, and campaigns pushing for prison abolition; as well as stories and art gathered from Initiate Justice's Inside Members. **In 2024, the journal will be sent to the printer in late February, late May, mid September, and mid October. It takes about three weeks to reach you after it's sent to the printer.**

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!), 400+ Inside Organizers, 300+ Outside Organizers, and members and volunteers across California.

What's inside?

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We'll be right back!

We will be taking time during the next few months to be intentional in strategizing, planning, and rejuvenating for 2025! We ask that you please be patient with us as we gear up for another year of advocating and organizing for our collective freedom.

We can't wait to return in the new year and share what we're going to be working on! - The Initiate Justice Team



Your next Journal will arrive in March 2025!

We receive thousands of letters every few months, please be patient with responses to mail. We've also experienced some changes in staffing lately, like people moving on in their career, taking a break from their career overall, or simply out of the office due to major life events. This could impact our response time.

- If you send us multiple letters asking for a response, it takes us longer to get any answer back as we have to sort, read, and write back to duplicate letters.
- Please write as clearly as possible on new member sign up sheets and letters to us so that our staff and volunteers can read it.
- Sign up yourself or another person to receive this journal! You'll know you've been successfully added to the list when you receive the March 2025 Journal.
- Please use our "Attns" when writing to us. See page 6 for details.

INITIATE JUSTICE MAILING ADDRESS

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Los Angeles, CA 90015

WEBSITE

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EMAIL

info@InitiateJustice.org

Social Media

facebook.com/InitiateJustice
instagram.com/InitiateJustice
tiktok.com/InitiateJustice

Spotlight on our Inside Organizing Program - Inside Organizing in Action

At Initiate Justice (IJ), our resource fairs, Inside Organizing workshops, and civic engagement classes serve as beacons of light that pierce through the heavy shadows of prison. These events are not just gatherings; they are transformative experiences that empower our inside community members to reclaim their voices and navigate the complex barriers they face. Our workshops infuse energy and education, creating a vibrant space where individuals can learn about their rights, engage in meaningful dialogue, and cultivate the tools necessary for political and civic participation.

Our programs are a lifeline for those who often feel their hopes are crushed under the weight of oppression. Through our efforts, individuals discover their potential as change-makers, equipped with the understanding of civic engagement and the fire to enact it. Together, we are dismantling the barriers that seek to silence us. Each workshop, each resource fair is a step towards empowerment, nurturing the seeds of hope and change that will flourish long after they leave the confines of prison.

Voices from our Inside Community

"Through completing the Inside Organizer training to finally meeting and working with some of their phenomenal staff, I have felt a level of inclusion and purpose that, up to that point, I had never experienced from an organization."

Kenthy, Inside Organizer

"The work that IJAG's (Initiate Justice Activity Groups) does is invaluable in terms of esteem, education and democracy. The workshops teach us how to work within the system rather than rebelling against it. The resource fairs give us guidance and much needed direction."

Dortell, Inside Organizer



"Every time Initiate Justice comes to our institution, the entire atmosphere changes! We get pumped up to take action, get engaged in our community, and put to use what we learn in IJAG's and workshops."

Chantell, CCWF Inside Organizer



Become an Inside Organizer!

- Send us a letter expressing interest in the IO program.
- After you've mailed this, you will hear from us in about 1 month.

INITIATE JUSTICE
Attn: Inside Organizing
P.O. Box 15836
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Wellness Corner

Initiate Justice understands that incarceration is a violent and ineffective practice. We are all in this community together with the shared goal of advocating to end incarceration. We commit to our mission and to our community of impacted people by staying aligned with our organization's core values.

A value is a person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in their life. Values shape the person we are and guide the choices we make in life. Circle 5 core values and think about how you utilize them in your life. Use these as reminders of who you are, or who you want to become.

HONESTY
ACCOUNTABILITY
TRUSTWORTHY
DETERMINATION
LOVE
COMPASSION
COURAGE
COMMUNITY
FREEDOM
EQUALITY
FAMILY
HUMOR
AUTHENTICITY

ABOLITIONIST
FRIENDSHIP
SERVICE
EMPATHY
OPTIMISM
FAITH
CREATIVITY
LOYALTY
ADVOCATE
TEAMWORK
GROWTH
PEACE

policy corner

BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW

AB 1986 (Bryan): CDCR Book Bans

This bill will require the Office of the Inspector General to post the list of books that have been banned by CDCR on the office's internet website. The bill will also authorize the Inspector General to review banned books, upon request, and determine if a banned book or publication is in violation of department regulations. The office will be able to notify CDCR if it does not agree with CDCR's determination that a publication it has reviewed is in violation of department regulations. **The Office of the Inspector General will be required to report annually to the Governor and the state legislature. The report must include a summary of the determinations that the Office of the Inspector General made for each publication the office reviewed.**

AB 1986 (Bryan) was signed by the Governor on September 26th, 2024 and the bill will go into effect on January 1st, 2025.

AB 2310 (Hart): Parole Language Access

This bill will increase language access for limited English speakers in the parole hearings process by requiring the Board of Parole Hearings to translate important notices and forms to the 5 most common non-English languages spoken by parole eligible incarcerated people.

AB 2310 (Hart) was signed by the Governor on September 28th, 2024 and the bill will go into effect on January 1st, 2025.

Note: The **bolded** sections in Policy Corner are updates on the bills from the last issue of *The Inside Journal*.

AB 2483 (Ting): General Resentencing Procedures

This bill establishes general legal and administrative procedures that apply to all resentencings. The bill requires stakeholders such as judges and public defenders to meet and collaborate in advance of any new resentencing law, and requires that CDCR assist litigants with obtaining institutional record within 30 days.

The county superior court judge has until March 1, 2025 to convene a meeting to develop a plan for fair and efficient handling of all post conviction proceedings.

AB 2483 (Ting) was signed by the Governor on September 29th, 2024 and the bill will go into effect on January 1st, 2025.

AB 1186 (Bonta): Youth Restitution

This bill will change the state's approach to youth restitution fines by alleviating the economic hardships that restitution fines create. This bill will eliminate prospective youth restitution fines going forward, vacate restitution fines older than 10 years, end wage and account garnishments. This bill will also end the practice of joint several liability for each juvenile involved in the case, prohibiting the state from requiring that each juvenile be held liable for 100% of the youth restitution amount. **This reform is a huge step toward ensuring racial and economic equity in California.**

AB 1186 (Bonta) was signed by the Governor on September 28th, 2024 and the bill goes into effect on January 1st, 2025.

policy corner

VETOED

AB 544 (Bryan): Voting in Jails

This bill would have established in person polling stations in county jails and require county jails to provide voter registration forms to eligible incarcerated voters. The bill would have created a pilot program in 3 counties: San Mateo, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties. The pilot programs would have begun in 2026.

AB 544 (Bryan) was vetoed by the Governor on September 22nd, 2024 and will not go into effect.

Governor Newsom's veto message stated: "While I appreciate the author's commitment to this issue, under the Elections Code, counties are able to establish these types of programs without statutory authority. Further, this bill creates a new, unfunded grant program and should be considered in the annual budget process."

Our response: "This veto isn't just a setback for incarcerated Californians, but for our democracy itself." (Thanh Tran, Ella Baker Center) "Despite the setback, Initiate Justice remains deeply committed, alongside our partners, to ensuring that the voices of justice-impacted people are meaningfully included in our democratic processes." (Antoinette Ratcliffe, Initiate Justice)

HELD

AB 2833 (McKinnor): Restorative Justice Confidentiality

This bill would have established comprehensive admissibility protections to ensure that information shared during a Restorative Justice session would not be admissible in future legal proceedings.

On August 8, 2024, in collaboration with Assembly Member McKinnor and The California Restorative Justice Policy Coalition, we made the difficult decision to stop moving this bill forward. The Senate Public Safety Committee made amendments to the bill that our coalition felt diminished the spirit and essence of this bill. The amendments would have excluded certain crimes from being protected or confidential under this bill.

What is the budget deficit and how does it impact our work?

The 2024 legislative bill cycle has been tough, and it might get tougher. Several criminal justice reform bills have been vetoed or did not reach the Governor's desk, due to California's budget concerns. Public Safety bills that our elected officials believe will cost too much money to implement or sign into law are often vetoed or stalled.

What is a budget deficit?

A budget deficit in the California state general fund happens when the state spends more money than has been collected throughout the year. Possible reasons for a budget deficit are: federal interest rate hikes, corporate tax rate breaks, recovering from natural disasters or public health crises. This year the budget deficit in California was estimated at \$46.8 billion.

What does a statewide budget deficit look like in our community?

A statewide budget deficit usually results in cuts or reduced funding to community resources such as Cal-Works, housing initiatives, healthcare, and workforce development programs. Trying to close the budget deficit gap in California also looks like vetoing or not passing bills out of appropriations that will take a portion of the state's general fund. For example, AB 544 which would have cost the state 1.5 million per year, starting in 2026.

policy corner

Other Important Criminal Justice Reform Bills

The following bills were not sponsored by Initiate Justice but could materially impact our communities. Because we are not sponsors of these bills, we do not have more information to share. To learn more about any of these bills, we encourage you to get in touch with an Inside Organizer in your yard for help, or go to the law library and search the bill on LexisNexis.

AB 1810 (Bryan): This bill requires any person incarcerated in state prison who menstruates, or experiences vaginal or uterine bleeding, to have easy access to menstrual products without having to request them. **This bill was signed by Governor Newsom on September 29th, 2024 and goes into effect January 1st, 2025.**

AB 1875 (McKinnor): This bill, the Culturally Competent Hair Care Act, requires the department, and local jail and detention facilities if they have a store, to additionally provide sulfate-free shampoos and conditioners, curl creams, and gel. **This bill was signed July 2nd, 2024 by Governor Newsom and will go into effect January 1st, 2028.**

ACA 8 (Wilson): This bill places a measure on the California 2024 General Election ballot to prohibit slavery in any form by prohibiting CDCR from disciplining any incarcerated person for refusing a work assignment. This bill passed the state legislature qualifying a measure to be proposed to California voters. It is currently on the November General Election ballot as Proposition 6. **Unfortunately, Proposition 6 was unsuccessful in passing and voted against by California voters. We remain committed to ending any form of slavery in California.**

SB 1069 (Menjivar): This bill gives the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) investigative authority over all staff misconduct cases that involve sexual misconduct with an incarcerated person. It requires the OIG to, upon the completion of an investigation, compile and submit a report to the appropriate hiring authority. **The Governor signed this bill on September 30th, 2024 and the bills go into effect on January 1st, 2025.**

SB 254 (Skinner): This bill would have required CDCR to allow news media access to tour facilities, and allow incarcerated people to be interviewed face to face. **The bill below was Vetoed by the Governor and will not be moving forward.**

AB 2160 (McKinnor): The California Women's Care Act, this bill would have allowed for a hearing to request a delay in sentencing and possible delay of sentence for pregnant people. It also would have required state prisons and county jails to keep results of a pregnancy test confidential and to offer a pregnancy test when requested. **This bill died in the Assembly and will not be moving forward.**

SB 94 (Cortese): This bill would have allowed a person serving LWOP to be resentenced if (1) the harm caused occurred before June 5, 1990 and (2) the person had already served at least 25 years in CDCR custody. **This bill was held in Assembly Appropriations and will not be moving forward.**

Bad Bills

There's been a rise in bills that attack our progress by reintroducing outdated and failed tough-on-crime policies, and that keep people cycling in and out of prisons and jails. That's why we also pay close attention to bills that could harm our communities, and set us back. This year we tracked over 70 harmful bills – submitting letters of opposition, showing up to hearings to provide testimony or a “Me-Too” in opposition, and mobilizing community members and partners to urge their legislators to vote no on these bills.

policy corner

The majority of them did not pass, which is a huge win for us! But a handful did. We are sharing some of these bills with you below. Please know that we could not have defeated these bills without the movement, community partners and coalitions who helped to stop these bad bills alongside us.

The following are harmful bills that we helped to defeat. These bills did not pass:

- **AB 1809 (Rodriguez):** would have prohibited individuals convicted of first-degree murder of a police officer from seeking recall and resentencing.
- **AB 1990 (Carillo):** would have authorized a police officer to make a warrantless arrest for a misdemeanor shoplifting offense not committed in the officer's presence.
- **AB 2341 (Fong):** would have made people convicted of a fentanyl-related offense ineligible to earn credits.
- **AB 3037 (Essayli):** would have made firearm enhancements ineligible for dismissal under certain provisions.
- **SB 804 (Dahle):** would have allowed police officers to testify to out of court statements.
- **SB 1262 (Archuleta):** would have allowed a police officer to arrest a person without warrant who fails to appear at a hearing to revoke, modify, or terminate postrelease community supervision.

These bills made it through the legislature and were signed by the Governor:

- **AB 1960 (Soria):** creates new sentencing enhancements for taking, damaging, or destroying property in the commission of, or attempted commission of, a felony.
- **SB 285 (Allen):** makes an individual who has (1) been convicted of a sexually violent offense, (2) who has been sentenced to death or to a term of life without the possibility of parole, and (3) who has not had their judgment reviewed and verified by the sentencing court ineligible for recall and resentencing. If this person has not had their judgment reviewed by January 1, 2025, it is not eligible for further review.

How to Best Write Us

Thank you for using "ATTN" on your envelopes when writing to us. It helps us process your letter faster!

For artwork submissions:

Attn: Artwork

For New Member Sign Ups:

Attn: New Members

For Inside Organizers:

Attn: Inside Organizing

Reminder

In California our legislative cycle is 2 years. A new 2 year legislative cycle begins every odd numbered year. The 2023-24 legislative cycle has ended. We now prepare to enter the 2025-26 legislative cycle.

Bills can be introduced in both 2025 and 2026. Only bills introduced in 2025 can become 2-year bills and continue to be pushed through the legislature in 2026 if they do not succeed in 2025. Bills introduced in 2026, must pass the legislature in 2026. You will be receiving the CA Legislative Process Guide with our February 2025 edition of The Inside Journal.

Important Note

We receive thousands of letters every few months! Please give us a month and a half to reply to you.

When you send us multiple letters asking for a response, it just takes us longer to get any answer back to you since we have to sort, read, and write to your duplicate letters. Also, please write as clearly as possible on new member sign up sheets and letters to us so that our staff and volunteers can read it.