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**Contact:** Sarah From 646-292-7749 or 718-546-4748 (cell)  
Ann Jacobs 646-292-7741

**Women Continue to be Hard Hit by Imprisonment in 2005;  
Dramatic Differences Between States Persist**

*As the Bureau of Justice Statistics finds women's imprisonment continues to rise, the Institute on Women & Criminal Justice points to the impact on children, families, and communities.*

New York, NY – *Prisoners 2005*, a report released yesterday by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), shows that the imprisonment of women continues to rise at a rate faster than that of men. According to the Institute on Women & Criminal Justice, these trends have a serious impact on the wellbeing of women, families, and communities.

The findings released show a continuation of trends identified in the Institute's May 2006 report, [\*HARD HIT: The Growth in the Imprisonment of Women, 1977 – 2004\*](#). In 2005, the number of women in prison in the United States grew at a rate of 2.6%, compared to a growth of 1.9% for men. Women now make up 7% of the prison population, up from 6.1% in 1995. Since 1995, the number of women in prison has grown 57%, while the number of men in prison has grown 34%, BJS reported.

***Increases in Female Imprisonment Rate Across the Nation;  
Mountain and Southern States Remain Especially Punitive***

Over half of the states saw an increase in their rate of female imprisonment in 2005. Oklahoma continues to lead the nation in the imprisonment of women, with a rate of female imprisonment of 129 per 100,000.

South Dakota and Kentucky, each with an imprisonment rate of 90 per 100,000, join the list of states with the top ten highest female imprisonment rates. Rounding out the top ten are Idaho (rate: 110), Mississippi (107), Louisiana (99), Texas (97), Colorado (91), Wyoming (88) and Arizona (85). Missouri and Montana dropped from the ten most punitive states, but remain in the top fifteen. These findings support the Institute's own research which points to especially punitive trends in Mountain and Southern states.

Northeastern states continue to predominate the list of those with lowest imprisonment rates. Rhode Island leads this group as the state with the lowest female imprisonment rate, 10 per 100,000.

***Reduce Reliance on Incarceration and Invest in Communities***

**Ann Jacobs, Executive Director of the Women's Prison Association commented, "We continue to send more and more women to prison despite the fact that most do not present a risk to public safety. It makes more sense to keep these women in the**



**community and address the underlying substance abuse, mental health, and economic issues that are central to their becoming self-sufficient and contributing members of society.”**

**Added Deputy Director of the Institute on Women & Criminal Justice, Sarah B. From, “Over two-thirds of women in prison have minor children. It is these children who are left behind by our punitive policies toward their mothers. If we want to strengthen families and address the root causes of crime, we have to shift from our over-reliance on incarceration to a real investment in healthy communities.”**

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*The Institute on Women & Criminal Justice, a division of the Women’s Prison Association, is a national center for research, policy, and information on criminal justice-involved women, their families and communities. For more information, please visit our website, [www.wpaonline.org](http://www.wpaonline.org).*