



INSTITUTE ON WOMEN
& CRIMINAL JUSTICE

For Release: June 27, 2007, Noon ET

Contacts: Sarah From
Deputy Director, Institute on Women & Criminal Justice
646-292-7749 or 917-686-4052 (cell), sfrom@wpaonline.org

Ann Jacobs
Executive Director, Women's Prison Association
646-292-7741, ajacobs@wpaonline.org

Women Continue to Outpace Men in U.S.'s Marathon Incarceration Growth

Institute on Women & Criminal Justice points to persistence of troubling trends, calls for greater investment in families in communities.

New York, NY – According to a semi-annual report on prison and jail data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the rate of growth of the incarceration of women in both prison and jail continues to outpace the rate of growth for men. The Institute on Women & Criminal Justice, the policy center at the Women's Prison Association, notes that this is a troubling continuation of a decades-long trend that saw the women's prison population increase by 757% between 1977 and 2004. The Institute points to the negative impacts of women's incarceration on children, families, and communities.

In Both Prison and Jail, Women Surpass Men in Population Growth

The Bureau of Justice Statistics found that the number of women in state or federal prison, now well over 100,000, increased at a rate nearly twice the rate for men between midyear 2005 and midyear 2006. In this time period, the female prison population grew by 4.8% while the male prison population increased by 2.7%. The imprisonment rate, a measure of the number of imprisoned women per 100,000 women in the population, rose as well, from 65 women per 100,000 at midyear 2005 to 67 women per 100,000 by June 30, 2006.

This trend is even more prominent as it pertains to women in local jails. While the overall growth in jail populations has begun to slow, the number of women in jail increased at more than double the rate of the male population between midyear 2005 and midyear 2006. During this one-year period, the number of women in local jails grew by 4.9% while the number of men grew by 2.2%. The Bureau of Justice Statistics notes that from 2000 to 2006, the number of men in local jails grew by 22%, while the number of women grew by 40%.

Commented Ann Jacobs, Executive Director of the Women's Prison Association, "We continue to put more and more women behind bars despite the fact that most do not present a risk to public safety. Most of these women are mothers, and their families suffer greatly. We know that drug treatment and alternatives to incarceration are a much better investment of taxpayer dollars, and, unlike incarceration, these programs equip women to live self-sufficient, law-abiding lives in the community."

Significant Racial Disparities Characterize Population of Women Behind Bars

At midyear 2006, Black and Hispanic women made up more than half of the population of women incarcerated. The incarceration rate for Black women, at 358 per 100,000, was nearly four times the

incarceration rate for white women, which stood at 94 per 100,000. Hispanic women, with an incarceration rate of 152 per 100,000 were more than 1.6 times more likely to be incarcerated than white women.

“Communities of color bear the brunt of our overly-punitive criminal justice policies,” said Sarah B. From. “We should be spending more money on bolstering communities with the services people need, and less money on removing people from communities to send them to prison.”

Prison Admissions Outpace Releases, Forthcoming Research Examines Related Trends For Women

The Bureau of Justice Statistics found that in 2005, the rate of prison admissions outstripped the rate of release. While overall prison admissions grew by 4.7% in 2005, prison releases grew by 3.9%. Forthcoming research by the Institute on Women & Criminal Justice will parse this phenomenon by gender. Noted Sarah B. From, “This is one of many trends that begs to be examined through the lens of gender. So often, by just looking at the patterns overall, we miss what is really happening for women.”

###

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.