



Support HB 632/SB506 to Raise the Age for Youth Accused of Minor Crime: Get RIGHT ON CRIME the First Time so Taxpayers Don't Pay Twice

North Carolina is one of only two states that continue to prosecute all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system, with no exceptions. This policy creates career criminals and increases the cost of public safety to taxpayers. Evidence shows that youth who go through the adult system are more likely to commit further crimes down the road than those who go through the juvenile system.

Right on Crime (see www.rightoncrime.com)

Right on Crime is a national initiative led by the Texas Public Policy Foundation, one of the nation's leading state-based conservative think tanks. The initiative aims to raise awareness of the conservative position on criminal justice policy by demonstrating the growing support for effective criminal justice reforms within the conservative movement. Right on Crime emphasizes that prisons are not the solution for every type of offender, and that they can have the unintended consequence of hardening nonviolent, low-risk offenders—making them a greater risk to the public than when they entered. Right on Crime stresses the importance of **cost-effective approaches** to criminal justice that **enhance public safety**.

Raising the Age is Being Right on Crime

Many of the principles behind the current effort in NC to raise the age are espoused by the Right on Crime initiative. **North Carolina's current policy towards juveniles results in less public safety and higher costs to taxpayers – exactly the reverse of good government.** In fact, North Carolina youth who serve time in adult prisons are more than twice as likely to be reconvicted later of other crimes as youth who are punished and rehabilitated in the juvenile system.¹

Instead of paying twice, let's get it right the first time by keeping 16- and 17-year-olds who commit minor crimes in the juvenile system where they belong. Placing these youth appropriately in the juvenile system improves public safety and reduces costs in the long run. It also means more rehabilitated youth being able to get jobs and support themselves, rather than being supported by the taxpayers.

Most Crimes Committed by Youth are Minor

Right on Crime stresses the importance of appropriate punishment for low-level offenders. Ninety-four percent (94%) of 16- and 17-year-olds arrested in the adult system are accused of non-violent crimes.²

- 79 percent are accused of misdemeanors.
- 18 percent are accused of low-level felonies (class F-I).
- Only 3 percent are accused of serious felonies (class A-E).

We can pay over and over for the costs of crime, or we can get Right on Crime the first time.

¹ NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission in conjunction with the N.C. Department of Corrections, "Correctional Program Evaluation: Fiscal Year 2001/02." 2006.

² State Bureau of Investigation 2007/08 Arrest Data and NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, 2007/08 Preliminary Youthful Accountability Planning Task Force Data.