

Address prison overcrowding by preventing wrongful convictions

Perhaps the most efficient way to ease overcrowding in Illinois prisons is to release those who do not belong there. From the **Chicago Reporter**, December 7, 2017, ***“Where does criminal justice reform stand one year after Kim Foxx elected?”***:

“On wrongful convictions, Foxx has exonerated a number of defendants over the course of the year. Last month, 15 men were exonerated in drug cases involving corrupt former police Sgt. Ronald Watts and his officers. That same week, four other wrongfully convicted men were freed. In the case of Arthur Brown, prosecutors were set to challenge his successful motion for a new trial, but dropped that effort after defense attorneys appealed directly to Foxx.”

From 2010 to the present, eight men wrongfully convicted in Lake County have been exonerated: Jerry Hobbs, Juan Rivera, James Edwards, Bennie Starks, Luther Jones, Darryl Pinkins, Jason Strong, and Angel Gonzalez.

The Conviction Integrity Unit of the Cook County State’s Attorney is spearheading investigations of potentially tainted prosecutions, but in addition the circumstances which produce wrongful convictions should be found and addressed.

Clearly there is something wrong with a criminal justice system that incarcerates so many innocent people—because, almost certainly, those released are but the tip of the iceberg. It is to society’s shame (and loss) that it does not demand that more be done to solve this problem.