

January 5, 2010

LETTER

## A Model for Prison Reform

To the Editor:

Re "[Smart Answers to Recidivism](#)" (editorial, Dec. 25):

You appropriately credited New Jersey for confronting the problem of recidivism and noted that many other states are also reconsidering their approach to incarceration, re-entry and rehabilitation.

You suggested that the Garden State, where about two-thirds of ex-offenders return to prison within three years, could offer a "model for the rest of the nation." But New Jersey and others are only now considering the kinds of strategies that New York, with a recidivism rate closer to one-third, has already put into effect in recent years.

New York has increased educational opportunities and vocational training for inmates, created local re-entry task forces and in-prison re-entry units to help offenders with post-incarceration housing and social service needs, reduced telephone call rates for inmates' families, enhanced specialized medical and mental health services in prison, launched drug diversion and community treatment programs, and prohibited disqualification of certain license applicants because of a criminal record. Our crime rate and prison population have both dropped sharply in the last decade.

In searching for a national model, The Times should consider New York's record.

Brian Fischer  
Commissioner, New York State  
Department of Correctional Services  
Albany, Dec. 31, 2009

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