

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Statement on Executive Grants of Clemency

December 22, 2023

America was founded on the principle of equal justice under law. Elected officials on both sides of the aisle, faith leaders, civil rights advocates, and law enforcement leaders agree that our criminal justice system can and should reflect this core value that makes our communities safer and stronger. That is why today I am announcing additional steps I am taking to make the promise of equal justice a reality.

First, I am commuting the sentences of 11 people who are serving disproportionately long sentences for nonviolent drug offenses. All of them would have been eligible to receive significantly lower sentences if they were charged with the same offense today.

Second, following my pardon of prior Federal and DC offenses of simple possession of marijuana, I am issuing a proclamation that will pardon additional offenses of simple possession and use of marijuana under Federal and DC law. Criminal records for marijuana use and possession have imposed needless barriers to employment, housing, and educational opportunities. Too many lives have been upended because of our failed approach to marijuana. It's time that we right these wrongs.

Just as no one should be in a Federal prison solely due to the use or possession of marijuana, no one should be in a local jail or State prison for that reason either. That's why I continue to urge Governors to do the same with regard to State offenses and applaud those who have since taken action.

I have exercised my clemency power more than any recent predecessor has at this point in their Presidency. And while today's announcement marks important progress, my administration will continue to review clemency petitions and deliver reforms that advance equal justice, address racial disparities, strengthen public safety, and enhance the well-being of all Americans.

NOTE: The statement referred to Proclamation 10688.

Categories: Statements by the President : Executive grants of clemency.

Subjects: Criminal justice system, reform efforts; Marijuana, decriminalization efforts; Pardons and commutations.

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