

More money is not what is needed to fight crime

Re: *“Democrats, ignore the crime wave at your own peril,” Nov. 7 commentary*

If I wanted to read inexpert tough-on-crime rhetoric, I’d pull up a copy of Trump’s full-page 1989 “Bring Back the Death Penalty” ad. I agree, “Americans want action.” That means something different from more of the same carceral- dependent tactics that have been deployed country-wide for the past many decades.

It’s simply untrue that there’s not already adequate funding for public safety. The Denver “public safety” budget is more than half a billion dollars. The Department of Corrections: close to a billion. Then there’s the attorney general, district attorneys, public defender, alternate defense counsel, probation, pre-trial supervision, courts, and community corrections. Still more is funneled into private companies, like ineffective drug and alcohol “treatment” and correctional communications providers.

Colorado’s post-prison recidivism rate oscillates between 40% and 50%. Fifty percent of new felonies are charged against people with prior system involvement.

It is an error to read these statistics as evidence that we’ve not wielded the hammer forcefully enough. Experts like psychologists, criminologists, philosophers, and prisoners and their friends and families know that our heavy reliance on carceral tactics is actually producing crime. Some of the lowest crime rates in the world are in countries with low carceral dependence.

Haphazardly throwing more money at this problem is not an answer. It’s time to demand that Colorado’s vast and well-funded network of criminal justice agents do their jobs competently. That will be the smart Democrat’s approach in coming elections.

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