



The economics of bail, fines, and fees in the U.S. criminal justice system

Monetary sanctions have played a role in the U.S. criminal justice system since its founding, but the way these sanctions—bail, fines, fees, and forfeitures—are used has changed dramatically over time and across jurisdictions, as illustrated in the recent *Timbs v. Indiana* Supreme Court ruling. These sanctions have important effects on who is detained and convicted, their subsequent labor market outcomes, and the priorities of law enforcement agencies. New, rigorous research has provided an opportunity to implement evidence-based reforms: making better use of alternatives to cash bail, adjusting individual sanctions to reflect ability to pay, and breaking the link between sanction revenue and the budgets of law enforcement agencies.

PAPER

A Proposal for Income-Linked Monetary Sanctions

Beth Colgan (UCLA School of Law)

The criminal justice system makes extensive use of monetary sanctions, but only limited use of information about income and ability to pay. Beth Colgan will review the experience of criminal justice fines and fees that are linked to income. Informed by this experience, she will propose policies that better achieve deterrence objectives while avoiding unnecessary harms to those interacting with the criminal justice system.

PAPER

A Proposal to End Law Enforcement as Tax Apparatus

Michael Makowsky (Clemson University)

Law enforcement-generated revenues play an important role in local and state budgets. Michael Makowsky will discuss the evidence that police activities are influenced by the way that criminal justice revenues are collected and distributed. He will propose reforms that, by separating revenue considerations from enforcement activities, would lead to a more efficient criminal justice system.



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A Proposal to Reform the Bail System

Crystal Yang (Harvard Law School) and Will Dobbie (Princeton University)

Will Dobbie and Crystal Yang will evaluate the economic consequences of the bail system, proposing reforms that balance economic costs and criminal justice objectives. New research has made it possible to assess the costs and benefits of cash bail and pre-trial detention. Based on this assessment, Dobbie and Yang will show how courts could improve their decision-making and make better use of options like supervised release and electronic monitoring.



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