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The Source - April 30, 2014

11:36 AM WED APRIL 30, 2014

The Source: Federal Clemency Program Could Free Thousands Of Drug Offenders

By [PAUL FLAHIVE](#) ([PEOPLE/PAUL-FLAHIVE](#))



http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kstx/files/styles/placed_wide/public/201404/Source-prison.jpg

Possibly thousands of federal prisoners could be released as a result of the proposed clemency.

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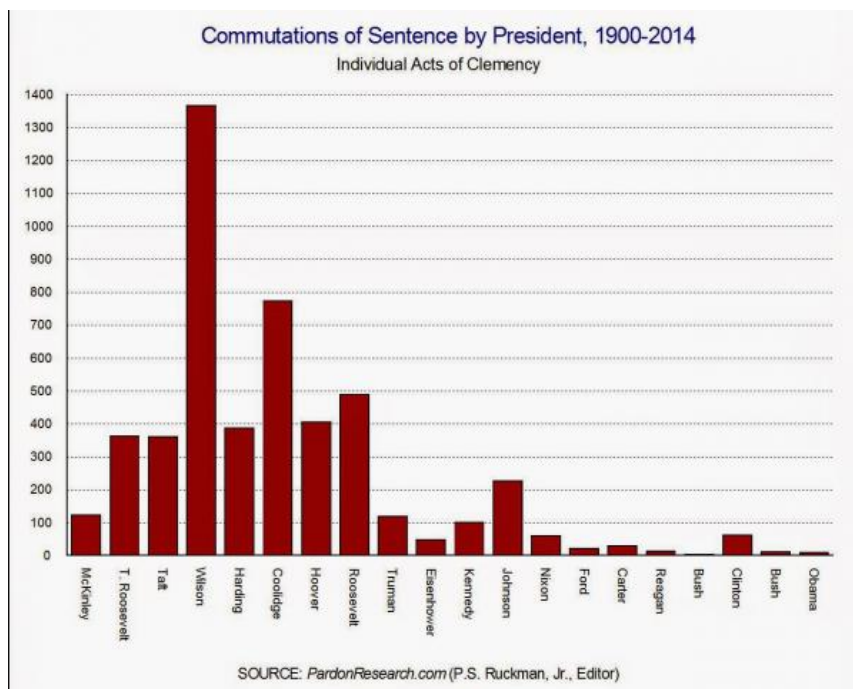
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The U.S. Department of Justice [announced](#) (<http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/dag/speeches/2014/dag-speech-140423.html>) last week that President Obama wanted to consider additional clemency applications based on a new set of factors that would allow for more just outcomes for nonviolent drug offenders.

According to P.S. Ruckman, a political science professor at Rock Valley College and writer for the blog [Pardon Power](#) (<http://www.pardonpower.com/>), while successive administrations have received record-setting applications, commutations of sentences are "freakishly low."

Lyndon Baines Johnson was the only president in the past 60 years with over 100 sentences commuted. Now, with this change, Obama is poised to commute hundreds, and possibly thousands, of federal prisoners.



Credit Pardon Power / P.S. Ruckman

"There are still too many people in federal prison who were sentenced under the old regime and who as a result will have to spend far more time in prison than they would if sentenced today for exactly the same crime," said U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder last week in a video statement.

Holder is referring to the 2010 Fair Sentencing Act, which lessened penalties on crack cocaine to bring them in line with penalties for powder cocaine. A long-standing inequity in mandatory sentencing that critics called racist as most cocaine users being white and most crack-cocaine users being black.

The clemency program would include inmates who have already served 10 years of their sentence, are nonviolent, and would have received a substantially lower sentence if convicted today.

Guidelines for inmates announced by DOJ:

1. Inmates who likely would have received a substantially lower sentence if convicted today
2. Are non-violent, low-level offenders
3. Have served at least 10 years of their sentence
4. Do not have a significant criminal history
5. Have demonstrated good conduct in prison
6. Have no history of violence prior to or during their current term of imprisonment.

Guests:

- P.S. Ruckman, professor of political science at Rock Valley College, author of the book "George W. Bush and the Pardon Power."
- Vikrant Reddy, senior policy analyst for the Center for Effective Justice and the right-leaning Texas Public Policy Foundation

**This is the second segment in the April 30 edition of The Source, which airs at 3 p.m. on KSTX 89.1 FM -- audio from this show will be posted by 5:30 p.m.*

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