The Marshall Project tracks the impact of our journalism on policymakers, advocates and other media. Here are some examples:

**MISTREATED** Kids in the Acadiana Center for Youth in St. Martinville, Louisiana, were mistreated even by the state agencies that sent them to juvenile lock-up in the first place, according to our reporting with NBC News and ProPublica. Our story shed light on the teens’ deplorable living conditions in around-the-clock solitary confinement, shackled with leg irons and deprived of an education. One expert called it “child abuse.” The story produced three types of impact:

- **State lawmakers** repeatedly cited our investigation at two committee hearings, where participants heard gut-wrenching testimony about solitary confinement in the youth justice system. “I lost part of who I was as a human being,” recounted one young man. “My need to feel loved. My need to feel in control of my life.” After the hearings, lawmakers quickly advanced a new bill placing strict limits on solitary confinement for children in Louisiana.

- **Advocates**, including the Equal Justice Initiative and Juvenile Justice Exchange, shared the story with their national audiences. Atlanta rapper T.I. “Tip” Harris created a one-minute video about Acadiana, and his social justice group called on Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards to shut the center down. Harris’ video then rippled out to a huge audience, including activist Tamika D. Mallory, who reposted the video on Instagram to her million-plus followers. A local group called Families and Friends of Louisiana’s Incarcerated Children incorporated our report in statements they sent to local media and policymakers.

- **Other media** covered the story widely. Louisiana's largest newspaper, The Advocate, reprinted our story in its local editions in Baton Rouge, Acadiana, and New Orleans. The paper also published stinging editorials condemning conditions at the facility and the secrecy surrounding its creation. Then The Advocate's newsroom went further, making its own request for state records and writing a follow-up story to our investigation. NBC's streaming news service featured commentary from Louisiana lawmakers and an interview by The Marshall Project's Beth Schwartzapfel with an Acadiana detainee. Meanwhile, our partnerships with NBC News and ProPublica also greatly expanded our national reach.

**TAKING FOSTER FUNDS** In 2021, The Marshall Project revealed that almost every state was taking federal benefits meant for foster children. Our investigation, co-published with NPR, was a finalist for the 2022 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting. And it continues to prompt local governments to take action:

- New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services has stopped the practice of taking Social Security checks meant for children in foster care and using that money to cover the cost of their care.
- Connecticut’s State Senate passed a bill outlawing the practice; a bill has also passed in the House.
- Nebraska passed legislation to require the Department of Health and Human Services to notify children in foster care about their Social Security benefits and provide information on the use of any benefits.
- In Philadelphia, a city council member has introduced legislation that would ban the city from taking Social Security benefits belonging to children in foster care for the city’s general fund. She learned about the practice from a Philadelphia Inquirer story that was inspired by our investigation and relied heavily on our data.
DIRTY METRICS | Operation Lone Star is Texas’ most expensive border security initiative to date. Gov. Greg Abbott touts the program’s many accomplishments on the campaign trail as he seeks re-election. But has it been effective? After months of analyzing data from the state’s Department of Public Safety, we published a four-part series questioning claims about the controversial program. What we found: Arrests of U.S. citizens hundreds of miles from the border and drug busts from across the state were all cited as Operation Lone Star’s border policing success.

Two weeks later, 15 public defense offices called on the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate the border program for making arrests based on race and national origin. The public defenders noted that more than 3,000 people have been arrested, the overwhelming majority of whom are Latino and Black men. The Dallas Morning News published an editorial chastising the state for using “dirty metrics” to pump up the program, while the Austin American-Statesman’s editorial called the border mission “long on hype, short on proof.” Our reporters conducted local radio interviews in English and Spanish, including Texas Public Radio, Houston Public Radio, City Limits en Español, and Radio Bilingue. Our investigation was also published in Spanish with Al Dia Dallas.

At the national level, CBS Mornings ran “Inside Operation Lone Star,” a lengthy segment questioning the controversial program’s effectiveness, and The Washington Post also our work in a major story. VOTING CONFUSION | Sometimes a story creates impact even before it is published. That’s what happened with our investigation into voting rights for formerly incarcerated people in Colorado, when our reporting prompted local officials to recognize a problem they had overlooked—and make changes.

The Marshall Project’s Ilica Mahajan got a tip from a mother who was confused by the forms her son received after he was paroled, telling him clearly that he was ineligible to vote. The Colorado state legislature had reversed that ban in 2019, restoring voting rights to 11,000 people on parole. Ilica quickly dug into the story, working with reporter Alex Arriaga and others on our data team, which recently won the prestigious Sigma award for our work on the voting rights of formerly incarcerated people.

The day before our article was published, the Colorado Secretary of State notified us that his office had updated its erroneous voter information form. Our story, co-published with the Colorado Sun, brought awareness to the general public. But we also wanted our reporting to reach incarcerated audiences, so Arriaga and data reporter Andrew Calderón appeared on Inside Wire, the first statewide prison radio station in the U.S. The conversation clarified the confusing information around parolees’ right to vote and also gave some insight into the reporting process. The interview aired in all facilities run by the Colorado Department of Corrections, which reaches up to 14,000 incarcerated listeners, hundreds of CDOC staff, and listeners on the outside.

JUDGED | Courts are one of the least transparent parts of the criminal justice system. That’s what makes The Marshall Project’s Testify—the culmination of more than a year of data analysis and community outreach—so unique. We took a deep dive into Cuyahoga County’s criminal court system and the individual records of its 34 judges. Some of them almost never send defendants to prison for charges like theft and drug possession. Others incarcerate one in three defendants. Meanwhile, 30% of the county’s residents are Black, but three-quarters of the people convicted in Cuyahoga courts and sent to state prison are Black.

We didn’t expect an immediate impact for our ongoing series. But we know that the county’s judges held an in-person meeting just days after our investigation appeared, and discussed our findings. And we know that our publication strategy made the story virtually unmissable: Testify appeared in no fewer than seven different local media outlets in Cleveland.

These media partners ranged from the local NPR affiliate IdeaStream, to a Black community radio station serving the Kinsman neighborhood and those adjacent to it. One of our seven partners was Cleveland Documenters, a local group that organizes and employs people to ferret out public information. Members of Cleveland Documenters worked with us to solicit input into our reporting priorities, as well as to distribute our reporting among communities who have been directly affected by the criminal justice system.

Because county judges are elected, the long-term strategy for impact may roll out over time—through raising public awareness about both the role of judges in the system and their sentencing records as individuals. Powerful local advocacy groups like the Cleveland NAACP and the ACLU of Ohio shared Testify on social media. The Greater Cleveland Congregations, a consortium of local faith groups from across Cuyahoga County, organized a community forum for residents to meet with candidates seeking election to the judicial bench.