



<sup>[1]</sup>Have you been prosecuted by the Feds? If not, consider yourself lucky. The U.S. Criminal Code has now reached 27,000 pages. Thanks to Congress, there is an ever-expanding number of laws for us to break. It wasn't always that way, writes [Gene Healy of the Cato Institute](#) <sup>[2]</sup>.

It's for good reason that our Constitution mentions only three federal crimes (treason, piracy, and counterfeiting).

The Founders viewed the criminal sanction as a last resort, reserved for serious offenses, clearly defined, so ordinary citizens would know whether they were violating the law.

The bar has been lowered. Today, thanks to liberals who hate business, "tough on crime" conservatives, and politicians milking contributions from special interests...

There are now more than 4,000 federal crimes, spread out through some 27,000 pages of the U.S. Code. Some years ago, analysts at the Congressional Research Service tried to count the number of separate offenses on the books, and gave up.... If teams of legal researchers can't make sense of the federal criminal code, obviously, ordinary citizens don't stand a chance.

You can serve federal time for interstate transport of water hyacinths, trafficking in unlicensed dentures, or misappropriating the likeness of Woodsy Owl and his associated slogan, "Give a hoot, don't pollute." ("What are you in for, kid?" your new cellmate growls.) Bills currently before Congress would send Americans to federal prison for eating horsemeat or selling goods falsely labeled as "Native American."

There are no plans, unfortunately, to lock up the politicians who created these ridiculous laws in the name of being "tough on crime."