



American Correctional Officer Intelligence Network

PRIVATE PRISON FACT SHEET

The following information is the most recent available. In 1998 the private prison industry stopped providing information on assaults, escapes, inmate population, inmate classification, staffing ratio's, turnover rates, training statistics and virtually all information that would allow the public to make an informed choice regarding the privatization of our correctional facilities.

At the American Correctional Officer and American Correctional Officer Intelligent Network we don't just talk about fighting privatization we walk the walk. Two members of ACO's leadership team are the original authors of HR 1889 The Private Prison Information Act which is now winding its way through the House of Representaives. A companion bill in the Senate, S.1010 sponsored by Senators Lieberman and Clinton is also now before Congress.

H.R.1889

Title: To require prisons and other correctional facilities holding Federal prisoners under a contract with the Federal Government to make the same information available to the public that Federal prisons and correctional facilities are required to do by law.

This law is now before Congress and the privateers are fighting against it. You can help by calling your Representative and asking them to support HR 1889. This legislation should be emulated in all states as well.

Why do we need this law? Below is what we do know, can you image what we don't?

ACA Accreditation:

- ◆ The privateers will point to the American Correctional Association accreditation process as the barometer of their professionalism. It is important to note that the ACA is a private corporation, not a government entity. Although the ACA claims that on occasion a private prison fails their accreditation process when pressed they refuse to identify even one such failure, public or private. The ACA also routinely accepts money from and advertises for the privateers, many corporate leaders in the private prison industry sit on the ACA's Board and Committees, hardly a scenario conducive to an object audit. The close relationship between the ACA and the private prison industry should be closing scrutinized.

The ACA also claims to monitor facilities to ensure they maintain compliance in subsequent years. The only records made available by the ACA show that less than 1% of the facilities they accredited are ever monitored.

Here is what the Corrections Professional had to say about ACA's accreditation:

“The action pushes to six the number of problematic facilities recently accredited by the ACA, fueling the debate about whether the ACA really is searching for excellence or is pandering to the private prison industry.”

The Corrections Professional, September 22, 2000

Assaults:

- ◆ George Washington University Professor James Austin found that ***assaults on staff are 49% higher and inmate on inmate assaults are 66% higher in private prisons vs. public prisons.*** (U.S. Department of Justice, BJA Monograph, “Emerging Issues on Privatized Prisons” NCJ181249, Feb. 2001) A comparison of serious incidents in public and private prisons in Oklahoma shows a far more shocking disparity. Oklahoma houses nearly 30% of their inmates in private prisons, one of the highest percentages in the nation. A review of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections data shows that there are ***190 percent more serious incidents in private prisons in that state.*** (“Will the Federal Government Rescue the Private Prison Industry?” Judy Greene, January 10, 2001.) In Tennessee the Fiscal Review Committee found that although private prisons did save the state money, (less than 1%), they had a much higher rate of assaults and five escapes during the analysis period. (The Commercial Appeal, 12/10/99)

Cost Savings:

- ◆ For years the industry touted the research of Dr. Charles Thomas as proof that private prisons save money. That was until it was revealed that much of Dr. Thomas's research was funded by the industry itself. When it was disclosed that Thomas owned stock in some of the very companies he was researching, he was removed from his position at a prestigious Florida University and received the largest fine every levied against an individual by the Florida Ethics Commission.
“...it maybe concluded that there are no data to support the contention that privately operated facilities offer cost savings over publicly managed facilities...it was discovered that, rather than the projected 20-percent cost savings,” touted by the industry itself, “...the average savings for privatization was only about 1%, and most of that was achieved through lower labor costs,” US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance: “Emerging Issues on Privatized Prisons,” James Austin, Ph.D., Gary Coventry, Ph.D., February 2001.

In addition, studies by the Government Accounting Office, the Council of State Governments and The Abt report, commissioned by the US Attorney General's Office, all point to very little or no cost savings.

Economic Development:

- ◆ Many communities have been drawn in by promises of job creation and tax relief by the private prison industry. Until recently there had not been any studies conducted, or evidence produced to dispute or support this contention. However, Margaret Hanson and Terry Besser (tbesser@iastate.edu 515-294-6508) of the Iowa State University Department of Sociology recently issued a study that was presented at the Rural Sociological Society Meeting in August of 2003. Their study showed that there was no change in housing and local business numbers when comparing new

prison and non-prison towns; that towns did not gain significantly when prisons were sited there; that changes in unemployment rates were “roughly equal”; and that, “The rate of increase in the number of new businesses, non-agricultural employment, average household wages, retail sales, median value of owner occupied housing, and the total number of housing units is *substantially less in new prison versus non-prison towns.*” (emphasis ours).

A second study released in February 2003 by Ryan S. King, Marc Mauer and Tracy Huling of The Sentencing Project in Washington, DC (www.sentencingproject.org, 202-628-0871,) found that “Overall, over the course of 25 years, we find *no significant difference or discernable pattern of economic trends* between the seven counties in New York that hosted a prison and the seven rural counties that did not host a prison.”

Many communities have found that the hidden costs of a private prison can be devastating to a community. The impact on local law enforcement, firefighters and other public safety officials can be substantial. The burden on local hospitals and municipal courts must also be considered.

“Sheriff’s offices in Lincoln, Bent and Crowley Counties (Colorado) all reported that civil filings increased after the (private) prisons were in operation. The Sheriff’s also reported increased problems with juveniles and juvenile drug use. The data shows that juvenile filings increased by 60.4% in the prison counties. In the four years following the opening of Bent County Corrections Facility, County Court filings in Bent County increased an astonishing 98.9 percent.”

(“Criminal Justice Master Plan” – Logan County: PACT 1998, *see also* Stephen Raheer, Brush News-Tribune, 8/8/01)

In New Mexico “State District Court clerk Jane Hernandez said the volume of litigation being filed (by inmates at the privately run Lea County facility in Hobbs NM) is so great that, ‘Sometimes it takes all day just to process them.’ District Judge Ralph Gallini indicated they may need to hire a law clerk just for this purpose.”

(Corrections USA New Mexico Compendium, B. Dawe Dec 1998 – June 2004)

The effects a prison has on real estate, where “location, location, location” is so important, can drive down property values. Ask yourself, would you want to live near a prison? Would you want to live near a nuclear waste or toxic dump site?

“The (private) prison has been a total bust. But no one will tell you that. They want you to think it’s been a boon for the city. Frankly, I’d rather have a hog farm. What has the prison done for us? I’d say halve the property value in this town. Real estate prices have plummeted.”

Sayre, OK, City Councilman William Dean

The perception of potential homeowners or small businesses is the same. Yet the private prison industry will tout their entry into your community as a positive event. Private prisons negatively impact public safety. They are not good tools for economic development, they are not good for our communities.

Escapes:

- ◆ The legislative department of the California Correctional Peace Officer’s Association tracked escapes from secure facilities in California between 1995 and 2004 and compared them with escapes from private prisons during the same period. Approximately 150,000 inmates are housed in secure

facilities in California. The privateers housed approximately 96,000 inmates during this time. The results: Escapes from the California DOC 12, escapes from secure private prisons 319. The CDC had a ratio of 1 escape for every 12,500 inmates. For the privateers the ratio is 1 escape per every 300 inmates.

- ◆ A 2001 Bureau of Prisons report revealed that 15 percent of privately managed “secure” facilities had escapes between August 1998 and July 1999. During the same period, 1.5 percent of federal prisons had an inmate escape. In 1999 the Federal Bureau of Prisons had one escape, its first since 1996. Although the BOP’s inmate population was 17% higher than the combined total of all inmates in private secure facilities, the private prison industry had 18 escapes from their facilities and 5 more escapes when transporting the inmates in this same period. (“*Growth and Quality of US Private Prisons: Evidence from a National Survey*” Scott Camp, Ph.D., Gary Gaes, Ph.D. Federal Bureau of Prisons, October 23, 2001). It’s even worse at minimum security prisons. Todd Craig, Chief Spokesperson for the Bureau of Prisons, has stated that the privately run facilities BOP contracts with have a 25 percent greater escape rate than similar BOP minimum facilities.” (*Comments to Activities Panel May 7, 2001, Shannon Lahey, Corrections USA*)
- ◆ Private inmate transport companies greatly endangered the public by failing to secure their inmates. From 1994-2000 there were 37 escapes from private transport companies, including murderers and child molesters. The United States Marshall’s transported twice the number of inmates during this period and had *NO* escapes. (*Mother Jones, May 2000*)

Good Jobs?:

- ◆ According to the Criminal Justice Institute’s 2000 Corrections Yearbook, the turnover rate of security personnel at public prisons is 16.3%, in private prisons it is an amazing 54%. In less than 2 years the entire staff of a private prison turns over. Virtually every correctional expert in the country will tell you that the experience level of a prisons security staff is one of the leading factors in controlling the inmate population. The industry will sell a community the idea that 95% of the jobs they create will go to the citizens living there. In reality that means that 95% of the people working behind those walls will have NO correctional experience. Is that the type of “safety” the American public wants? In private prisons the only pros are the cons.

Health Care (Inmates:)

- ◆ The Tulsa World reported on January 9, 2005, that “At least 17 Tulsa Jail inmates have died since **Corrections Corporation of America** took over operations, four times the number who died in the jail the previous five years.” Sheriff Stanley Glanz said private companies have an incentive to keep medical costs low, which can lead to poor care for inmates. "There are times for cost situations that they will take short cuts," Glanz said. "It's not just CCA; it's all these medical providers. The ideal situation is to have your own medical staff."

Lack of proper medical care is one the largest and most expensive areas of inmate litigation. (For more on private health care providers in a correctional environment see ACOIN’s Private Medical Report)

Inmate Releases:

- ◆ The Corrections Yearbook reports that ***57% of all inmates in a private prison are released directly into the community where the prison is located*** and are NOT sent back to their sentencing jurisdiction.

Innovation:

- ◆ Claims of innovative technology and techniques in efficient management were touted as revolutionizing all of Corrections. Yet after over 20 years the industry cannot point to one such innovation or technique that has been adopted in any public jurisdiction. In fact the industry leaders have hired directly from the public sector to fill many of their highest-ranking decision making positions. Corrections Corporation of America's President is Michael Quinlan former Director of the Federal Bureau Prisons under President George Bush. Wackenhut Corrections hired another former BOP Director Norm Carlson who served under President Reagan. Civigenics brought in Tom Rapone and Peter Argeropoulos the former Secretary of Public Safety and Associate Commissioner from the Massachusetts Department of Corrections. Cornell hired Larry Fields former Director of Corrections in Oklahoma and Frank Pruitt former Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Corrections, and at Management Training Inc., their front man is former Utah Corrections head honcho Lane McCotter now of Abu Graib fame. So much for new and innovative ways to look at corrections.

In February 1999 at a Privatization Workshop sponsored by the University of Minnesota School of Law, James L. Saffle then the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections was asked what innovations the private prison industry had brought to Oklahoma, one of the most privatized prison systems in the country. Mr. Saffle responded, "None, it's been the other way around, they've learned from us." According to a report by Ph.D.'s Austin and Coventry, "The assumption that privately operated prisons are safer or better managed than publicly operated facilities is not supported by the results presented in this report." (*U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Monograph "Emerging Issues on Privatized Prisons" February 2001, NCJ 181249*)

Liability:

- ◆ "Private prison companies have promised that they will reduce or eliminate government liability. But it is absolutely clear, (under state and federal law) that the states cannot divest themselves. If companies make that promise, it's an absolute false promise.clearly the law does not allow the state to sell off its liability in this manner." Ira Robbins, American University, Professor of Law and author of "The Legal Dimensions of Private Incarceration." (*Phoenix New Times, Robert Nelson, April 3, 2003,*)

Public Safety:

- ◆ "Over the years, the private sector has had significant problems with the incarceration and management of medium security and high security offenders. In particular, the private sector has not demonstrated the ability to manage high security sentenced inmates for long term confinement..." Thomas Kane, Assistant Director for Information, Policy and Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, 6/20/02.

Training:

- ◆ The 2000 Corrections Yearbook reports that ***private prison guards receive 32% fewer pre-service training hours than professional public Correctional Officers***. The average private prison guard

receives 149 hours of pre-service training, professional Correctional Officers receive 251. In private transport its worse. The US Marshals receive 16 weeks while Transcor employees, run by CCA, get only one week of training.

Turnover:

In private prisons the rate at which security staff turns over is an astonishing 53%. In less than 2 years the entire security staff changes over. Hence the saying, “The only pros in a private prison are the cons.” Public facilities have a 16% turnover rate. (Corrections Yearbook 2000) Tennessee found that turnover in private prisons there was a staggering 86.1%. (<http://www.wkrn.com/Global/story.asp?S=1960454>) A 2001 report submitted to Congress by the Federal Bureau of Prisons study showed institutions with a more stable staff have lower instances of escape, assault and drug use. (“*Growth and Quality of US Private Prisons: Evidence from a National Survey*” Scott Camp, Ph.D., Gary Gaes, Ph.D. Federal Bureau of Prisons, October 23, 2001).

For more information on Prison Privatization please contact the American Correctional Officer Intelligence Network at 1-307-883-9707 or visit our websites at www.COIntel.net and www.americanco.org. ACO/ACOIN provide expert testimony and research in the area of prison privatization and can assist you in fighting this very dangerous trend.