

## PHASING OUT OUR USE OF PRIVATE PRISONS

August 18, 2016

Courtesy of *Deputy Attorney General Sally Q. Yates*

When most people think of the Justice Department, they are likely to imagine the most visible parts of our job – the law enforcement agents who investigate crimes or the lawyers who prosecute them. But the department's core responsibilities go beyond investigation and prosecution. Unlike most states, the federal government puts its law enforcement agents, criminal prosecutors, and correctional officers all in a single department. We handle every step from the start of an investigation to the end of a prison sentence. Our work to house and rehabilitate individuals incarcerated in the Federal Bureau of Prisons is an important part of our responsibility and operations, accounting for 25 percent of the department's budget every year.

The federal prison population increased by almost 800 percent between 1980 and 2013, often at a far faster rate than the Bureau of Prisons could accommodate in their own facilities. In an effort to manage the rising prison population, about a decade ago, the bureau began contracting with privately operated correctional institutions to confine some federal inmates. By 2013, as both the federal prison population and the proportion of federal prisoners in private facilities reached their peak, the bureau was housing approximately 15 percent of its population, or nearly 30,000 inmates, in privately operated prisons.

2013 was also the year that the Department of Justice launched its Smart on Crime Initiative after identifying reforms that would ensure more proportional sentences and effective use of federal resources. Today, in part as a result of that initiative, we are experiencing declining numbers in our prison population. We now have approximately 195,000 inmates in bureau or private contract facilities down from a high in 2013 of approximately 220,000. This decline in the prison population means that we can better allocate our resources to ensure that inmates are in the safest facilities and receiving the best rehabilitative services – services that increase their chances of becoming contributing members of their communities when they return from prison.

Today, I sent a memo to the Acting Director of the Bureau of Prisons directing that, as each private prison contract reaches the end of its term, the bureau should either decline to renew that contract or substantially reduce its scope in a manner consistent with law and the overall decline of the bureau's inmate population. This is the first step in the process of reducing—and ultimately ending—our use of privately operated prisons. While an unexpected need may arise in the future, the goal of the Justice Department is to ensure consistency in safety, security and rehabilitation services by operating its own prison facilities.

Today's memo reflects important steps that the bureau has already taken to reduce our reliance on private prisons, including a decision three weeks ago to end a private prison contract for approximately 1,200 beds. Taken together, these steps will reduce the private prison population by more than half from its peak in 2013 and puts the Department of Justice on a path to ensure that all federal inmates are ultimately housed at bureau facilities.

### **Attachments:**

[Download Memo - Reducing Our Use of Private Prisons](#)

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January 26, 2016

Courtesy of *Vanita Gupta, Head of the Civil Rights Division*

AILA Doc. No. 16081830. (Posted 10/7/16)

Since he took office, President Obama has demonstrated bold leadership by advancing an agenda for common-sense criminal justice reform, advocating for more fair, more effective and more efficient criminal justice policies. President Obama's announcement yesterday that he will adopt the Justice Department's recommendations to reform the use of restrictive housing – including solitary confinement – in our federal prison system marks a critical, and indeed historic, step of progress.

### Reentry and the Affordable Care Act

April 17, 2014

This post is courtesy of Associate Attorney General Tony West. Earlier this month, at a conference hosted by the Community Oriented Correctional Health Services and the journal Health Affairs, I had the opportunity to speak with a distinguished group of policymakers, researchers and health care and criminal justice professionals about the implications of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) for those under correctional supervision. The fact is that the Affordable Care Act holds the promise of...

### BJS Releases Jails in Indian Country, 2013

August 1, 2014

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) released Jails in Indian Country, 2013, which presents findings from the 2013 Survey of Jails in Indian Country, an enumeration of 79 jails, confinement facilities, detention centers, and other correctional facilities operated by tribal authorities or the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The report examines trends from 2000 to 2013 in the number of adults and juveniles held, type of offense, number of persons confined on the...

### The Justice Department is Determined to Protect Our Economy by Combating Intellectual Property Theft

June 21, 2013

This post is courtesy of Attorney General Eric Holder. American companies are among the most innovative in the world. They're responsible for important technological advances that benefit consumers, create jobs and support our economy. But today, this prosperity inevitably attracts global rivals – including individuals, companies and even countries that are eager to use illicit means to tilt the playing field to their advantage. Fortunately, the women and men of the U.S. Department of Justice,...

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*Updated August 31, 2016*