



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 2006

Resolution calling upon the President and the United States Congress to ban the practice of placing prison inmates in solitary confinement and provide supportive services to all inmates leaving solitary confinement from federally operated prison systems.

By Council Members Dickens, Foster, James, Mealy, Palma, Seabrook and White Jr.

Whereas, The use of solitary confinement in United States' (US) prisons began in the early 19th century to provide prisoners an environment in which to repent, pray, and find time for introspection; and

Whereas, Today solitary confinement is used as a tool to punish inmates for infractions committed while serving sentences in federal prison; and

Whereas, Conservative estimates show that there are more than 25,000 inmates in US federal and state prisons serving their sentences in solitary confinement; and

Whereas, According to the US Census Bureau's data from 2000, there were 2,600 people imprisoned in federal prisons and detention centers located in New York City; and

Whereas, Solitary confinement typically constitutes segregating an inmate for 23 hours a day, allowing the inmate out only to shower or get outdoor exercise in a small caged space, and disallowing any contact with the outside world; and

Whereas, Studies have shown that solitary confinement can cause severe psychiatric distress to inmates as well as cause long-standing social disorders; and

Whereas, Inmates are more apt to commit suicide when they are in or have experienced prolonged periods of solitary confinement; and

Whereas, An increasing number of jurists throughout the world have concluded that solitary

confinement constitutes cruel and unusual punishment and view solitary confinement as torture; and

Whereas, US Senator John McCain of Arizona, who spent five and a half years tortured as a prisoner of war stated “solitary confinement is an awful thing... it crushes your spirit and weakens your resistance more effectively than any other form of mistreatment;” and

Whereas, Almost 95 percent of the inmates in isolation in the US will be released back to society and many of them will receive little, if any, assistance with their transition; and

Whereas, It is imperative for federally operated prisons to offer mental support services and reentry services for those isolated inmates reentering society from solitary confinement in light of the difficulties they will face; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the President and the United States Congress to ban the practice of placing prison inmates in solitary confinement and provide supportive services to all inmates leaving solitary confinement from federally operated prison systems.

WJH
6/4/09
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