

Senate Joint Memorial 11

Sponsored by Senator TAYLOR

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

Commends United States Department of Justice for decision to end its use of private prisons.

JOINT MEMORIAL

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2 To the President of the United States, the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United
3 States of America, in Congress assembled, and the Attorney General of the United States:

4 We, your memorialists, the Seventy-ninth Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon, in legis-
5 lative session assembled, respectfully represent as follows:

6 Whereas private prisons have recently come under scrutiny for dangerous and unethical prac-
7 tices; and

8 Whereas in using private prisons, Americans are paying for substandard accommodations and
9 services that are often found to be in violation of laws and contract provisions; and

10 Whereas private prisons, originally put forth as being cost-effective, have proved more expensive
11 than government-run prisons; and

12 Whereas in order to increase profits, many private prisons have cut costs by serving inmates
13 food that is spoiled or in amounts insufficient to provide enough nutrition and calories to sustain a
14 healthy adult; and

15 Whereas inadequate levels of medical care in private prisons have been responsible for dozens
16 of inmate deaths; and

17 Whereas overcrowding in private prisons has led to inmates being wrongfully housed in solitary
18 confinement cells intended for use only in disciplinary actions; and

19 Whereas ignored complaints of inhumane conditions have resulted in prison riots at private fa-
20 cilities; and

21 Whereas understaffing at private prison facilities has led to injuries of staff and inmates and the
22 death of at least one corrections officer; and

23 Whereas security lapses at private prisons have allowed an unacceptable number of escapes,
24 such as that of three convicted murderers from Kingman Prison in Arizona in 2010 that resulted in
25 the kidnapping and murder of an Oklahoma couple; and

26 Whereas private prisons are not subject to public records law in the same manner as
27 government-run prisons and are able to conceal violations by blocking transparency; and

28 Whereas the government is subsidizing private business through the indentured work of prison-
29 ers in private prisons; and

30 Whereas due to mandated quotas and contracts that force payment whether beds are filled or
31 not, the use of private prisons incentivizes incarceration; and

32 Whereas despite free market competition claims, three corporations have obtained virtually all

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter [*italic and bracketed*] is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 contracts for federal prisons, making it difficult for the government to replace a substandard con-
2 tractor; and

3 Whereas the poor, minorities and immigrants are disproportionately affected by the policies and
4 laws supported by the private prison lobbies; and

5 Whereas a number of Oregonians are troubled by the ethical considerations that surround
6 profiting from the imprisonment of others and feel that the incarceration of prisoners is the province
7 of the government, not for-profit corporations; and

8 Whereas many Oregonians are grateful that in August 2016 the United States Department of
9 Justice announced that it would discontinue its use of private prisons to incarcerate federal inmates
10 and hope that other agencies and jurisdictions will follow the department's lead; now, therefore,

11 **Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:**

12 That we, the members of the Seventy-ninth Legislative Assembly, commend the United States
13 Department of Justice for its decision to end its use of private prisons to incarcerate federal pris-
14 oners; and be it further

15 Resolved, That a copy of this memorial shall be sent to the President of the United States, to
16 the Senate Majority Leader, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Attorney Gen-
17 eral of the United States and to each member of the Oregon Congressional Delegation.

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