



May 15, 2014

The Honorable Bill Haslam  
State Capitol  
First Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Haslam,

I am writing on behalf of ACLU members and supporters across the country, including the more than 23,000 signers of the attached petition, to urge you to end contracts with the Corrections Corporation of America.

Privatization is not always a bad thing. But incarcerating people should be the government's responsibility. The government has a vested interest in protecting public safety and reducing both the number of people behind bars and recidivism. CCA has a vested interest in keeping prisons and jails full. Indeed, CCA reported in SEC filings that "risks" to its bottom line include "reductions in crime rates," lower minimum sentences for nonviolent crimes, and greater use of cost-saving probation and electronic monitoring in place of incarceration. Clearly, private prisons are beholden to shareholders, not taxpayers.

Every year, the state of Tennessee pays the Corrections Corporation of America nearly \$100 million to run prisons and jails. While CCA has promised us better, cheaper and safer prisons, time and again across the country they have delivered abuse, mismanagement and violence instead.

In a 2012 audit, the Tennessee Comptroller's office found that two of three CCA facilities audited did not meet the performance standard of "Limit(ing) the rate of violent institutional incidents (per 100 inmates)." One CCA prison in Idaho was known as the "Gladiator School" because it had four times the number of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults than the state's seven other prisons combined. In Ohio, CCA was ordered to pay the state \$500,000 for violations of 47 state standards.

While proponents claim private prisons save governments money, evidence of cost savings is mixed at best. In Tennessee, taxpayers were contractually required to pay CCA nearly a half-million dollars for empty beds at the Nashville jail in 2011. In Idaho, CCA admitted in court to falsely billing the state for 4,800 hours of unstaffed security posts at one prison and the FBI is currently investigating. Indeed, numerous meta-studies have found that private prisons offer no cost advantage. One of the few studies that does show a cost benefit is a Temple University study often cited by private prison corporations. What they fail to note, however, is that this study was funded by for-profit prison companies and that its authors are currently the subject of an ethics investigation by the university.

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Opposition to prison privatization is widespread. Numerous religious groups, including the United Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and many others, have condemned prison privatization because of the inherent conflict between the justice system's goal of rehabilitation and private prisons' profit motive. At the end of April, three investment groups pledged to divest \$60 million from CCA and other private prisons, joining the growing number of investors who have pulled funds from private prison corporations for ethical and financial reasons.

Today over 23,000 people are joining the call to end prison privatization in Tennessee. They have signed the attached petition urging you to end Tennessee's contracts with the Corrections Corporation of America. The attached list of petition signers was updated May 14, 2014. The number of petition signers continues to grow online at <https://www.aclu.org/whoiscca>.

On behalf of ACLU members and supporters across the country, I urge you to follow the lead of Texas, Idaho, Mississippi and Kentucky and end Tennessee's contracts with CCA.

Thank you,

  
Hedy Weinberg  
Executive Director