

[WPLN News](#) | May 14, 2014

## [ACLU Calls On Haslam To Break Ties With Prison Company CCA Amid Trousdale County Expansion](#)



A CCA facility in Eden, Texas. The ACLU is asking that Gov. Bill Haslam end Tennessee's \$100 million worth of contracts with CCA. (Photo: WikiCommons)

The ACLU plans to deliver a petition to Gov. Bill Haslam on Thursday, asking that the state end dozens of contracts with Nashville-based Corrections Corporation of America. It comes the same day the nation's largest for-profit prison company has its annual shareholders meeting.

The ACLU says CCA [has a track record](#) of cutting corners to save money. In a letter to the governor, it points to an [FBI investigation](#) into alleged lying about staffing levels at an Idaho prison. A former guard at the same facility [claims in a lawsuit](#) that he was given empty pepper spray containers and a radio without batteries – in addition to being assaulted.

The ACLU sued the Idaho facility in 2010, alleging that the jail's excessive violence made inmates dub it

the “Gladiator School.” The group said understaffing contributed to the high level of violence. Idaho subsequently dropped their contract with the facility

The civil liberties group plans on delivering the petition to Gov. Haslam with 25,000 signatures. It asks that the state cease all of its contracts with CCA. Those contracts total almost \$100 million. Other states, including Mississippi and Texas, have dropped contracts with CCA after high-profile incidents of inmate violence.

Hedy Weinberg with the ACLU says CCA’s priorities align with stockholders over taxpayers, saying “those goals don’t focus enough on ensuring public safety.”

In a statement to WPLN, CCA Spokesman Jonathan Burns said the company keeps communities safe and works to reduce recidivism by enrolling inmates in reentry programs.

“It’s unfortunate that the ACLU would advocate against those benefits without themselves providing any solutions to the serious challenges our corrections systems face,” Burns said. “Overcrowding and skyrocketing costs aren’t solved with politics and posturing.”

The ACLU campaign comes as county officials in [Trousdale recently approved](#) the construction of a new CCA prison. The company says its the facility an hour northeast of Nashville will create 400 new jobs. That’s in a county where the entire workforce totals around 10,000 people.

The prison has been in the works since 2007, and has faced many delays.

**Share:**

8



By: [Bobby Allyn](#) Bobby Allyn is an enterprise reporter with WPLN. Reach him at [ballyn@wpln.org](mailto:ballyn@wpln.org) Please keep your community civil. Comments will be moderated prior to posting, and Nashville Public Radio reserves the right to approve them at its discretion. Comments containing links promoting goods, services - even noble organizations - will not be published. Your comments may include external links, but all comments with links will be delayed as they are reviewed. Comments containing profanity will be rejected.