

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/alabama-legislature-hearing-eji-complaint-sexual-abuse-at-tutwiler-prison-for-women/>

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06.21.12

At a meeting of the Alabama Legislatures Joint Prison Oversight Committee yesterday, where lawmakers discussed reports of sexual abuse of female inmates at Tutwiler Prison in Wetumpka, Alabama Department of Corrections Commissioner Kim Thomas said he has asked for an audit of operations at Tutwiler.

In May 2012, [EJI reported evidence of frequent and severe officer-on-inmate sexual violence](#) at the Tutwiler Prison for Women. EJI has asked the Department of Justice to investigate that matter and they have agreed to do so.

Thomas said no investigation is needed but told lawmakers he had requested technical assistance from the National Institute of Corrections to tour the facility, talk with staff and inmates, review internal policies, and make recommendations of steps that can be taken to reduce inappropriate staff conduct with female inmates.

Thomas said he also asked two of his staff, who are responsible for making sure the Department of Corrections is in compliance with the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003, to look at how investigations are conducted when abuse is reported.

State Senator Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, vice chairman of the joint legislative prison committee, said he would like the report to be available to committee members during the next meeting and committed to continuing to monitor the situation.

EJI director Bryan Stevenson said he appreciated the commissioners words but said the department needs to get past good intentions to meaningful solutions.

There are specific protocol responses and actions that we believe can lower the incidence of sexual violence at the womens prison and we hope that the department will consider implementing them, Stevenson said.

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