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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | February 26, 2017

Hawaii moved one step further towards passing a bill that would significantly restrict the use of prolonged solitary confinement at the states eight prisons and jails. According to the [Honolulu Civil Beat](#), under [Senate Bill 603](#), the use of segregated confinement would be reserved only for inmates who are found guilty of an offense involving violence, escapes or attempts to escape or those who pose a serious threat to institutional safety. The bill, which is now headed for a full vote of the Hawaii Senate, would also set strict limits on how long people could be held in administrative or disciplinary segregation.

The Oregon State Senate passed a bill [that would limit](#) the Oregon Youth Authority from using isolation as punishment. We know that locking any person up in isolation as punishment is harmful to them mentally and emotionally, said state Sen. James Manning, D-Eugene. These are vulnerable kids, anyway, and then using a punishment technique like that naturally hurts more than it helps. The bill now moves to the Oregon House.

Meanwhile, in Montana, a bill died in a legislative committee that would have restricted the state from placing people with mental illness in solitary confinement. According to a locate site, the [Missoulian](#), the only opposition to the bill came from the Department of Corrections, which told the committee that while would like to reduce its use of isolation cells, it does not have the resources.

A federal judge has issued a temporary ruling that Onondaga County, in New York, [must immediately stop placing](#) 16 and 17 year olds in solitary confinement. The temporary halt is the result of a larger class-action lawsuit filed in September by the New York Civil Liberties Union and Legal Services of Central New York. New York is one of only two states that automatically charges 16 and 17-year-olds as adults.

In Tennessee, a federal judge has [approved a request](#) to expand the possible number of plaintiffs in a suit that seeks to end the use of solitary confinement for children locked up by the Tennessee Department of Childrens Services, including in the Rutherford County Juvenile Detention Center. The government cannot lock children in isolation like this with next to no standards or regulations, said TomCastelli, legal director for the ACLU of Tennessee, which helped filed the suit. Sometimes children make mistakes, and the best thing we can do for them is focus on rehabilitating them so that they can become productive members of society, not mistreating them and causing long-term damage.

The state of Kansas held a man in solitary confinement for 1000 days [based on false statements](#) by at least one Kansas Department of Corrections employee. James Jamerson was kept in isolation for years on allegations of gang involvement, even though nothing in his disciplinary file or criminal history suggested he had connections to gang activity. In ruling issued last June based on Jamersons case, the Kansas Supreme Court found that Kansas judges must consider an inmates duration in solitary confinement when determining whether the inmates rights have been infringed upon.

Aviva Stahl is a Brooklyn-based reporter who writes about science/health at the intersection of mass incarceration, national security, and trans rights. Shes written for the New York Times, Wired, Buzzfeed News, Solitary Watch, and other outlets. Find her [@stahlidarity](#) and at [stahlidarity.com](#).

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October 5, 2022

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