

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/aclu-releases-new-publication-showing-rapid-decline-privately-owned-prison>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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CONNEAUT, OH Today, the ACLU of Ohio released a timeline to state legislators and the public chronicling the first 18-months in the life of Lake Erie Correctional Institution (LaECI), the nations first prison sold to a for-profit company. The release comes two days before the anniversary of the Lucasville prison uprising and amidst reports that LaECI is currently on lockdown after an inmate was seriously beaten in an April 7 prison fight.

Laid out in a timeline format, the decline of this facility is clear, said ACLU Director of Communications and Public Policy Mike Brickner. In less than two years this prison has become a privately owned accident waiting to happen.

The ACLU of Ohio also announced that it received documents from inside the prison that indicate the private prisons segregation unit is overcrowded now at 130% capacity with dozens of cells housing three inmates, meaning prisoners are sleeping on the floor.

The parallels between LaECI and what transpired two decades ago in Lucasville are frightening, added Brickner. Overcrowding, triple-bunking, a rise in assaults, and gang activity all preceded the Lucasville uprising. Nearly 20 years to the day since that tragedy, it is clear the nations first privately-owned prison is teetering toward the brink as well. This facility has become unsafe for inmates, employees, and the surrounding community. Unless serious changes are made, its only a matter of time before something terrible happens.

A February Audit of LaECI by the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC) found a number of alarming statistics. From 2010-2012, inmate-on-inmate assaults at LaECI have increased by over 180 percent while inmate-on-staff assaults increased by over 300 percent. Inmate violations for fighting have increased 40 percent, and the total number of prison disturbances in 2012 doubled in comparison to prior years.

The ACLU timeline lays these finding alongside other prominent stories from LaECI, including reports of rampant smuggling and a previous audit that found inmates defecating in bags with no access to running water.

Along with the timeline, the ACLU also issued a letter to legislators asking them to consider legislative action to increase accountability and safety at the troubled private prison.

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