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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

close

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | May 11, 2014



The following roundup features noteworthy news, reports and opinions on solitary confinement from the past week that have not been covered in other Solitary Watch posts.

Representative Cedric Richmond (LA-02) [introduced](#) the first-ever federal legislation addressing the use of solitary confinement, called the Solitary Confinement Study and Reform Act of 2014. If passed, the bill would create funding for the development of best practices, which would subsequently be put in place in federal facilities. Richmond said, Our approach to solitary confinement in this country needs immediate reform. The practices imposed on prisoners, including the seriously mentally ill and juveniles, at all levels of our penal system raise significant 8th amendment concerns and it is time we have this conversation about what kind of country we are.

Hundreds of people from across the state [gathered in Albany](#) to show support for a bill that would strictly limit the use of solitary confinement in New Yorks prisons and jails. [Capital News Tonight](#) hosted a panel about the bill, called the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act.

In the wake of a hunger strike at Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Representative Adam Smith (D-WA) has [introduced a bill](#) to improve conditions inside federal immigration lock-ups. The Accountability in Immigration Detention act would, among other things, prohibit placing detainees in solitary confinement in retaliation for whistleblowing.

The [AP](#) published an in-depth account on the last hours of Jerome Murdough, who was found dead in his cell on Rikers Island in February 2014. Murdough was being held in solitary confinement on the newly-opened mental health unit when his cell overheated; according to the AP report repair workers were not available to fix the problem due to the long holiday weekend. He had been arrested on a misdemeanor trespassing charge for sleeping in an enclosed stairwell of a public housing building, but had been unable to post the \$2,500 bail.

A local New Mexico outlet, [KUNM](#), published the ^{third}part of an ongoing series about solitary confinement in the state.

An interfaith alliance in Milwaukee [held an event](#) to highlight the number of individuals in the state being held in prison past their parole date, many of whom remain in solitary confinement. The session was attended by several representatives from the state legislature. A Buddhist chaplain involved in the campaign to halve the prison rolls also [published an op-ed](#) in a Madison paper.

Democracy Now! host Amy Goodman penned an op-ed voicing her opposition to solitary confinement, which was published in several outlets across the country (including [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

People in prison and advocacy groups in California who were involved in the 2011 and 2013 hunger strikes [have offered their position](#) on two bills currently moving through the California state legislature. They support Assembly Bill 1652, which would prohibit the state from placing individuals in solitary confinement simply on the suspicion that they belong to a gang (gang validation); they oppose Senate Bill 892, which was designed to achieve more comprehensive reforms, because it neither explicitly prohibits gang validation nor indeterminate terms in solitary confinement units. [The San Francisco Bay View](#) published a letter from four former hunger strikers about

their perspectives on the legislation.

Amnesty International USA has [launched an investigation](#) into the deaths of two New Jersey men who died in prison. One man, Robert Taylor, was allegedly placed in a restraining jacket in solitary confinement despite the fact that he was going through alcohol withdrawal.

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](#).

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 5, 2022

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