

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/04/04/congressional-briefing-on-solitary-confinement-to-take-place-this-week/>**

## Campaign and Advocacy

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by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | April 4, 2011

For the first time, members of Congress will sponsor a Capitol Hill briefing on the use and abuse of solitary confinement in U.S. prison and jails. Sponsors include John Conyers, Ranking Member on the House Judiciary Committee, and panelists include several people we've written about before on Solitary Watch, including [Robert King](#), [Laura Rovner](#), and [David Fathi](#). What follows is information from the [flyer](#) on the briefing.

**Congressmen John Conyers (D-MI), Robert C. Bobby Scott (D-VA) and Cedric Richmond (D-LA)**

**Invite you to attend a briefing and documentary screening on:**

**Wednesday, April 6, 2011 Room 2226 Rayburn HOB**

**3:30 PM Briefing**

Each day tens of thousands of prisoners in the U.S. are held in solitary confinement. Usually in isolation for at least 23 hours a day and denied human contact, these inmates are subject to a range of other restrictive conditions. This briefing will examine the detrimental impacts of the abusive use or over-use of solitary confinement, including its disproportionate impact on inmates of color, the appropriateness of its use on mentally ill inmates, and other concerns about its use by correctional facilities.

**Welcome by Congressmen John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) and Robert C. Bobby Scott (D-VA)**

**Michael Randle, Program Manager for the Judge Nancy R. McDonnell Community Based Correctional Facility**

**Robert King, Only Freed Member of the Angola 3, Released in 2001 after 29 years in Solitary Confinement in Angola Prison in Louisiana**

**David Fathi, Director, American Civil Liberties Union, National Prison Project**

**Laura L. Rovner, Associate Professor of Law, Civil Rights Clinic, University of Denver College of Law**

**Tory Pegram, Campaign Coordinator, International Coalition to Free the Angola 3 (Moderator)**

**4:30 PM Documentary Screening**

In the Land of the Free Narrated by Samuel L. Jackson, this documentary examines the story of three extraordinary men known as the Angola 3: Herman Wallace, Albert Woodfox and Robert King who together have spent more than a century in solitary confinement in Louisiana. Two of the men are still held in solitary after a record 39 years.

There will be a discussion with Robert King, and Carine Williams, Angola 3 attorney for both civil and criminal cases following screening.

Rep. Cedric Richmond (D-LA) will participate in the documentary screening.

**Addendum:** In response to several requests from readers, here is contact information for the Congressional co-sponsors, with whom you can make your opinions heard on solitary confinement:

**Rep. John Conyers, Jr. (D MI)**

2426 Rayburn H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515  
Ph: 202-225-5126 / Fax: 202-225-0072

Email form: <http://conyers.house.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Contact.OnlineContactForm>

Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/CongressmanConyers](http://www.facebook.com/CongressmanConyers)

**Rep. Bobby Scott (D VA)**

1201 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-8351/Fax (202) 225-8354

Website: <http://www.bobbyscott.house.gov/index.php>

**Rep. Cedric Richmond (D LA)**

415 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-6636/Fax (202) 225-1988

Email form: <https://richmond.house.gov/contact-me/email-me>



James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, Blood in the Face. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets @solitarywatch.

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 [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

@Jerry Williams

Here is a site that has info on the National Criminal Justice Commission Act your referring to.

<http://friendsofjustice.wordpress.com/2011/04/26/call-in-to-support-the-national-criminal-justice-commission-act/>

Excerpt:

NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION ACT OF 2011

SUMMARY

The National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2011 will create a blue-ribbon commission charged with undertaking an 18-month, top-to-bottom review of the criminal justice system. Its task will be to propose concrete, wide-ranging reforms to address the most pressing issues facing the nations criminal justice system.

WHY THIS LEGISLATION IS URGENTLY NEEDED

The United States has by far the worlds highest incarceration rate. With five percent of the worlds population, our country now houses twenty-five percent of the worlds reported prisoners. More than 2.3 million Americans are now in prison, and another 5 million remain on probation or parole.

Our prison population has skyrocketed over the past two decades as we have incarcerated more people for non-violent crimes and acts driven by mental illness or drug dependence.

The costs to our federal, state, and local governments of keeping repeat offenders in the criminal justice system continue to grow during a time of increasingly tight budgets.

Existing practices too often incarcerate people who do not belong in prison, taking resources away from locking up high-risk, violent offenders who are a threat to our communities.

Transnational criminal activity, much of it directed by violent gangs and cartels from Latin America, Asia and Europe, has permeated the country. Mexican cartels alone now operate in more than 230 communities across the country.

Incarceration for drug crimes has had a disproportionate impact on minority communities, despite virtually identical levels of drug use across racial and ethnic lines.

Post-incarceration re-entry programs are haphazard and often nonexistent, undermining public safety and making it extremely difficult for ex-offenders to become full, contributing members of society.

#### LEGISLATION: REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission shall undertake a comprehensive review of all areas of the criminal justice system, including Federal, State, local, and tribal governments criminal justice costs, practices, and policies. After conducting its review, the Commission shall make recommendations for changes in oversight, policies, practices, and laws designed to prevent, deter, and reduce crime and violence, improve cost-effectiveness, and ensure the interests of justice at every step of the criminal justice system.

Today is Wednesday, April 28 and I heard there was supposed to be a hearing (or a vote) on solitary confinement in the Congress. I have been trying to find out what transpired but to no avail. I thought this site might have an update but no. Does anyone out there know of the outcome of yesterday's congressional action?

I hope former long term isolation cell occupants or even some current prisoners held in isolation can be called to testify as to how it affects them and what are the long term drawbacks from that kind of (Torture) treatment, as well as some ideas as to what decompression steps should be taken after they are let out of isolation cells. When U.S. military personnel are released from short or long term hostage captivity they are taken directly to Walter Reed Medical and other like facilities for de-briefing etc. and the conditions they were held under come nowhere close to what men and women have to endure in the American Prison systems.

Im impressed with Mr. Fathi work:

<http://www.aclu.org/blog/author/David-Fathi%2C-Director%2C-National-Prison-Project>

Too bad the authors of S.B. 176 are not on this list.

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-c-fathi>

This week, Colorado state Sen. Morgan Carroll and Rep. Claire Levy introduced a bill that would substantially limit the use of solitary confinement in the states prisons. S.B. 176 would restrict solitary confinement of prisoners with mental illness or developmental disabilities, who currently make up more than one-third of the states solitary confinement population.

They would have brought some balance to the panel. And how about Senator McCain?

Of course there is Rovner.

Having only these three members of congress (all black) and an advocate of Middle Eastern heritage from the ACLU, as talented as they all may be, viewing this particular film together just isnt a recipe for broad attendance. At least not in my opinion.

That said I am glad that at least this small segment of the congress is bringing up the issue.

This should not however be allowed to become a black, and/or Muslim issue. It is an American issue and one of abuse of power.

where can we send letters from solitary inmates to them? and why not more of a heads up to do so?

Liza, please see the addendum to the post with contact information for Congressional co-sponsors. Their sponsorship suggests some ongoing interest in this issue, so it is never too late to send letters or emails.

Will there be CSPAN coverage?

Which of Rovners several cases will she be discussing?

Will at least one of your reporters be attending to record what takes place?

dam i like to go to this as well to bad i do not drive and am in school lol and not rich lol

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