Story Memo Log – Michael Rooney

For my story memo, I would like to investigate the allocation of funds between Federal dollars going towards government-run prisons and to private for-profit prisons. I have planned to include in my investigation, how many federal dollars allocated to government prisons as opposed to the cost of contracting with a for-profit prison. I would also like to touch on how the private prison industry has lobbied Congress for tougher sentencing and how this plays into the overall costs of prisons.

I have been looking for newer statistics concerning the current prison population housed at both state-run and for-profit prisons and what the cost is per year for housing a convict at a federal prison versus how much the government pays per convict per year if their detention has been contracted out to a for-profit prison company.

As I am having trouble finding more recent data, I am want to narrow my search to one state, likely the state which houses the highest percentage of its prison population in for-profit prisons, and carry out my comparison there instead, but only in the event that federal information is unavailable.

As of now, I am looking for newer, more in-depth statistics concerning this issue. However, I have been unsuccessful in finding this information. I do plan to keep searching for this information until either I find it or I am convinced that such data is unavailable.

March 27, 2014

I have decided to narrow the scope of my story memo and focus on the investigation of the allocation of funds between state tax dollars going towards government-run prisons and to for-profit prisons in the state of California.

I have decided to do this after having read an article speaking about the chronic overcrowding of California state prisons and how private prisons are being used to alleviate this problem.

The article can be found here: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/25/california-private-prison_n_4157641.html>

So far I have been able to document this rise in the use of for-profit prisons in California by the financial statements of the company Corrections Company of America (CCA) from 2008 and 2012. These statements can be found at <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/809695-cca-2008-financial-data.html#document/p20/a128233> and <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/805880-q4-2012-supplemental-disclosure-cca-2.html#document/p20/a127283> respectfully.

My next search will be for both data on both the state budget allocations to state correctional facilities and the dollar amount being spent on contacts with private correctional companies, such as CCA.

I will then calculate, based on the number of prisoners held in both state and for-profit prisons with the goal of finding out how much money the state is actually spending per-prisoner in both state and for-profit prisons.

March 30, 2014

This week I was able to find a recent California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation budget at <http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/budget/Budget_Overview.html>. However, I have still not been able to find a breakdown on how much of this budget is allocated to contacts with for-profit prisons.

However, I was able to find a recent L.A. Times article that speaks about how Governor Jerry Brown is planning to ramp up spending on for-profit prisons, as well as the possible downsides of this policy decision. This article can be found at <http://articles.latimes.com/2014/jan/15/local/la-me-ff-brown-plans-to-ramp-up-spending-on-private-prisons-20140115>.

My next step will be to continue searching for California government documents that outline the cost of contracts with for-profit prisons.

April 10, 2014

This week I was able to find all of CCA’s fourth-quarter financial data from 2008 to 2013, which includes total annual revenue, as well as a breakdown of all State of California-contracted facilities by number of inmates. This should be able to answer my first question: What is the per-inmate cost to CCA of all California inmates?

I will then be able to answer my second question when comparing this to CDCR data: What is the difference in cost of incarceration between inmates held in CDCR facilities versus the cost of incarceration for inmates held at CCA facilities?

This will then lead to my final major question: Does the contract price that CDCR pays to CCA reflect the difference in cost between incarceration of CDCR versus CCA facilities?

In other words, does contracting the incarceration of these inmates save the State of California money?

The only problem that I am having at the moment is that I have been unable to find all the CDCR budgets from 2008-2013, which will present a problem if I want to show a rise or decease in the cost of contracted incarceration. I will continue looking, but for now I will go ahead with my analysis of CCA facilities in terms of cost-per inmate, as well as my analysis of the CDCR budgets I do have.