

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **Private Prison Company with Highest Sex Abuse Rate Has Executive on National Prison Rape Elimination Commission**

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For Immediate Release

Washington, DC – It was recently reported by Channel 7 KOAT in Albuquerque and the *Mountain View Telegraph* in Estancia, New Mexico that local officials were called to Washington to testify about the Tarrant County Detention Facility, which, according to a recent U.S. Department of Justice study, has the highest rate of sexual victimization among inmates in a survey of almost 300 jails nationwide. The facility is operated by Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the nation's largest for-profit prison firm.

The Dept. of Justice report, released last June, found the Tarrant County facility had an inmate sexual victimization rate of 13.4%, which was **more than four times higher** than the national average rate of 3.2%. County and CCA officials appeared before the Review Panel on Prison Rape on Sept. 30 to discuss the high rate of sexual abuse at the privately-operated detention facility.

Not reported, however, was the fact that CCA vice president and general counsel Gus A. Puryear IV is a member of the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission, which is developing standards to reduce incidents of sexual abuse in correctional facilities.

Mr. Puryear was nominated last year for a federal judgeship in the Middle District of Tennessee, where CCA is headquartered. During the contested nomination process it was learned that he missed half of the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission's public hearings, during which corrections professionals and former prisoners testified about sexual abuse in prisons and jails.

Mr. Puryear's judicial nomination has been challenged by a number of organizations, including the Private Corrections Institute (PCI). PCI is a non-profit citizen watchdog group that opposes prison privatization and maintains a clearinghouse of information about the private prison industry.

"While it's ironic that a CCA executive serves on the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission, given that one of CCA's for-profit facilities has the highest rate of inmate sexual abuse in the nation, it's also unfortunate that he missed half of the Commission's hearings," remarked PCI vice president and former CCA prisoner Alex Friedmann. "Apparently neither Mr. Puryear nor CCA places sufficient importance on the prevention of sexual abuse in the company's private lockups."

Channel 7 KOAT reported, "The Department of Justice found that inmates were more likely to be sexually attacked when jails are significantly understaffed, have a high turnover rate of corrections officers, allow pornography in cells and do not track inmate grievances alleging a sexual assault."

Private prison companies, including CCA, have been found to have significant staffing problems, employee turnover rates more than three times those in public-sector prisons, and higher rates of inmate-on-inmate violence than in public facilities. In regard to staff turnover, Torrance County Sheriff Clarence Gibson alluded to the low wages that CCA pays, stating, "We do see turnover. But I don't think it's turnover because of the facility itself, I think it's turnover because [staff say] 'I can make more money' [elsewhere]."

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The Private Corrections Institute (PCI) is a non-profit citizen watchdog organization that works to educate the public about the significant dangers and pitfalls associated with the privatization of correctional services. PCI maintains an online collection of news reports and other resources related to the private prison industry, and holds the position that for-profit prisons have no place in a free and democratic society. [www.privateci.org](http://www.privateci.org).

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