

RESOLUTION
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ARIZONA
2012 Diocesan Convention

Title: Reaffirm criminal justice reform and oppose contracting for private prisons in Arizona

Proposed By: St. Michael's Social Action Committee, St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Tucson

Name, Address, Phone Number of Delegate: Paulette O'Malley, 7125 E. Flamenco Drive, Tucson 85710. (520) 296-8749.

Date: September 1, 2012

BODY OF RESOLUTION:

Resolved, that the 2012 Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona join other faith communities, including American Friends Service Committee, the United Methodist Church (USA and Arizona), the Presbyterian Church USA, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, the United Church of Christ, and the national Episcopal Church, in opposing contracting for private prisons and other actions which reduce vulnerable prisoners to the status of tradeable commodities; and be it further

Resolved, that the appropriate Diocesan entities communicate this resolution to the Governor of Arizona, the media, and Arizona legislative committees involved in state prison contracting and oversight, urging them to accept direct responsibility for prisoners remanded to state incarceration and to seek solutions to incarceration that respect the dignity of prisoners and work toward their rehabilitation and re-introduction into society; and be it further

Resolved, that these actions, which relate specifically to present or proposed conditions in Arizona, are consonant with Resolution 2000-B055 of the 73rd General Convention of the Episcopal Church, "Reaffirm Criminal Justice System Reform," which affirms that "the Episcopal Church at all levels become active at local, state and federal levels on public policy decisions affecting the growing prison industrial complex," and which further resolves that "the Episcopal Church call for a moratorium on . . . the use of private prisons"

EXPLANATION OF RESOLUTION:

This resolution addresses private prison contracting as it affects Arizona prisoners, in part because, as the resolution is being submitted, the Corrections Corporation of America has approached states about contracting for additional facilities. Our understanding is that the State would need to guarantee a minimum of 1000 beds at 90% occupancy for 20 years, which in effect makes the punishment contingent upon the contract, not upon the crime – at a time when the overall prison population is dropping. Additionally, oversight is much reduced, there are no guarantees for adequate staffing and services, and the Arizona legislature no longer requires that the private corporation demonstrate a cost reduction for the state ["Private prisons are abhorrent – and they cost more, too," tucsoncitizen.com, August 20, 2012]. Our Baptismal covenant to "seek and serve Christ in all persons" commits us to speak out against such exploitation. The state that convicts needs to accept responsibility for its prisoners.

Although there is no specific reference to the broader problem of federal contract prisons, it should be noted that the same conditions apply: many house nonviolent immigrants, many are in Arizona, and many have achieved notoriety for abuses and criminal neglect of medical problems – most notably the contract federal prison in Eloy.