

## **PRESS RELEASE**



Private Corrections Institute ([www.privateci.org](http://www.privateci.org))

June 19, 2013 – For Immediate Release

### **Corrections Corporation of America Loses Four Private Prison Contracts in One Month**

Nashville, TN – On June 18, the Idaho Board of Correction voted not to renew the state’s \$29.9 million contract with Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the nation’s largest for-profit prison company, to operate the 2,104-bed Idaho Correctional Center (ICC). Once the state’s contract with CCA expires on June 30, 2014, it will be rebid.

The Board’s decision to let the contract expire marks the fourth private prison contract that CCA has lost since mid-May, including two in Texas and one in Mississippi.

On June 10, CCA was notified by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice that the company’s 2,216-bed Dawson State Jail, and its Mineral Wells Pre-Parole Transfer Facility with 2,103 beds, will both close on August 31. The Texas legislature had cut \$97 million from the state’s budget in anticipation of closing the facilities.

The Dawson State Jail has been a source of controversy for CCA after several prisoners died at the facility amid allegations of medical neglect. Pam Weatherby, serving a one-year sentence, died at Dawson in May 2010; her parents claimed she did not receive adequate treatment for her diabetes. The family of Ashleigh Parks, 30, who died of pneumonia in 2008 while serving an 18-month sentence, said her death could have been prevented had she received antibiotics. Also, in June 2012, Dawson staff ignored requests for medical care by prisoner Autumn Miller, who was six months pregnant. Miller gave birth in a toilet at the jail and her baby, Gracie, lived just four days. Once Miller was returned to Dawson she was put in solitary confinement.

According to the *Texas Observer*, “A January 2012 audit of Dawson health services by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice found multiple systemic failures: noncompliance more than half the time in areas of preventative, gynecological, dental, HIV and elder care. They even failed the basics: conducting inspections, having enough first aid kits, providing medically appropriate diets to sick prisoners, and keeping adequate records.”

CCA’s Mineral Wells Pre-Parole Transfer Facility had a history of contract violations and security deficiencies – including sexual misconduct by CCA staff, a riot involving hundreds of prisoners, contraband smuggling and escapes.

On May 17, 2013, CCA lost its contract to operate the 1,000-bed Wilkinson County Correctional Facility in Mississippi after the state awarded the contract to rival private prison company MTC, effective July 1. The facility houses Mississippi state prisoners. In April, a riot at WCCF resulted in nine prisoners being sent to outside hospitals; one, Demond Flowers, 21, was stabbed to death.

“CCA’s loss of four contracts in quick succession indicates that the bloom is off the private prison rose,” noted Alex Friedmann, president of the Private Corrections Institute, a non-profit watchdog organization that opposes prison privatization.

CCA’s most recent loss of the ICC contract closes a particularly sordid chapter in the company’s history. In 2011, CCA settled a federal class-action lawsuit filed by the ACLU that alleged high levels of violence at the ICC; the facility was known as a “gladiator school” due to excessive violence among prisoners. A report by the Idaho Department of Correction found the ICC had four times the number of violent incidents as all Idaho state facilities combined. As part of the settlement, CCA agreed to make numerous changes to reduce violence at the ICC.

CCA also settled a lawsuit filed by prisoner Hanni Elabed, who was brutally beaten by another prisoner at ICC while CCA guards watched from a control room but did not intervene. Elabed suffered severe injuries as a result of the assault, which was videotaped; CCA strongly opposed the release of the video, which showed its employees failing to stop the violent attack.

In November 2012, eight ICC prisoners filed a lawsuit against CCA, claiming the company’s employees were colluding with incarcerated gang members to operate the facility, including in terms of housing assignments and as a means of controlling the prison population. The lawsuit, which remains pending, also alleges understaffing at the ICC.

And on April 11, 2013, CCA acknowledged that ICC employees had falsified staffing records from at least May through November 2012. As a result, the state paid CCA for almost 4,800 staffing hours for positions that were vacant during that time period. The Idaho State Police is reportedly conducting a criminal investigation into staffing fraud at ICC.

“Either due to fiscal reasons or CCA’s record of misconduct, states are realizing that they can do better than contracting with CCA or no longer have a need for the company’s privately-operated facilities,” Friedmann stated. “This reflects a trend in which states are reducing their prison populations and, thus, have less incentive to contract with for-profit prison firms.”

CCA’s loss of the four contracts in Idaho, Texas and Mississippi includes a loss of over 7,400 prison beds, or nearly 10% of the company’s current number of occupied beds. CCA trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol CXW.

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