Guild Notes

Volume 51, No. 2, Summer/Fall 2026

Photo of NLG Staff Members and NLG President along with NLG Member Rashida Tlaib during the April 2026 NLG convention in Michigan

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Welcome to New Jailhouse Lawyer Members

If you are receiving this newsletter, that means that we have received your request to be added as a member. We are a membership association of lawyers, law students, legal workers, and jailhouse lawyers. Membership is open to anyone incarcerated who writes to the NLG National Office expressing their interest in becoming a member, and there is no cost. Membership lasts for three years, after which you can write to us again to let us know to renew and if you have a different mailing address. Formerly incarcerated members have the option to annually renew their membership once they are released, with a waiver if needed. Your membership will be as a national member, not affiliated with a local chapter.

NLG Membership Consists of:

- Subscription to *Guild Notes*, which comes out 2 or 3 times a year

- The *Jailhouse Lawyers Handbook* (currently 2021 edition - write to us if you need one!)

- Opportunity to submit writing to the "Beyond Bars" column in *Guild Notes*:

When submitting, think about what in your experience as a jailhouse lawyer might be beneficial to share with other jailhouse lawyers around the country. Drawing upon personal experience as an illustration of a broader topic is encouraged. There is a word limit of around 750 words. You can send to: GN Submissions, National Lawyers Guild, PO Box 1266, New York, NY 10009. (Please also let us know if you would like your full name published). Unfortunately, we cannot write back to everyone who sends us an article, and there is no guarantee that an article will be published. We do, though, appreciate every submission we receive, and all give us insight that we wouldn't otherwise have of what is going on inside the prison walls.

- Ability to vote in our annual elections on bylaws/resolutions

Beyond these, the NLG staff do not have capacity to facilitate further benefits, including:

- Membership cards
- Access to legal representation or to have a lawyer read through your legal documents
- Ability to return any legal documents you send to us back to you or to anyone else
- Marking either *Guild Notes*, the *Jailhouse Lawyers Handbook*, or any other mail as "legal mail", as we are not a law office and not acting in any representative capacity

NLG Statements

Ready for the 90th: Hello from NLG's New Executive Director

Dearest NLG member,

Next year, NLG turns 90 years old. Nine decades of fighting fascism, of standing on the left side of history, of centering those behind bars and criminalized for political beliefs. In August 2026, I had the huge honor of becoming the newest Executive Director of our organization's National Office.

About Me and My Work

I come to this role after serving as NLG's Director of Mass Defense since late 2023. As Director of Mass Defense, I reinvigorated our Mass Defense Program, advocated for our movements in national and international media, and kept NLG at the forefront of the right to dissent. Under my guidance, NLG published a resource on navigating criminal prosecutions, updated our robust Know Your Risks Booklet, and became the first nonprofit organization to publicly support the Prairieland Defendants in North Texas, an unprecedented prosecution of anti-ICE protesters who together face over 500 years in prison.

I am proud to bring with me my knowledge against political prosecutions, an essential issue Guild members are dealing with across the country. From Stop Cop City charges in Atlanta to Free Palestine prosecutions across the Carolinas, my efforts have supported political defendants across the South. Finally, I have experience fundraising with and providing guidance to nonprofits in North Carolina, my home state; Georgia, my organizing stomping grounds; and California, where I attended law school.

NLG Will Keep Standing against Fascism

Every few years, organizations say that the current political moment is "decisive" for the country, as if the United States would ever decide on its own to align with Guild values. At the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, our members must decide: what will we do against the fascist threats around us? The answer must be resounding and unanimous: we will stand up and fight back.

The Guild has spent close to nine decades prioritizing the rights of people and ecosystems over property. I hope that you continue advancing our values and struggles from wherever you are. I will endeavor to do so as NLG's Executive Director, as a member of the North Carolina NLG, and as an organizer first, attorney second, with the People's Law Collective.

"What will you do in this time of great failures and great injustices? What will you do?
How will you help each other?
How will you help yourselves?"
- Excerpt from Post-Sentencing Statement of Benjamin "Champagne" Song, Prairieland Defendant sentenced to 100 years in prison.

- Xavier T. de Janon
NLG Executive Director

NLG Statements

NLG Opposes DOJ Plan to Lower Bar for States to Expedite Capital Punishment

This statement was submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice in opposition to the proposed rule changes.

NLG submits this comment in strong opposition to the Department of Justice's proposed rule amending 28 CFR Part 26 ("Proposed Rule"). The NLG is the nation's oldest and largest progressive bar association, and our members across the country regularly represent individuals fighting capital punishment. Hence, the Proposed Rule directly affects our interests.

Before addressing the Proposed Rule's specific legal defects, the NLG writes to situate those defects in their proper context: capital punishment in the United States has never operated fairly, and this Proposed Rule will amplify its unfairness. The NLG has consistently opposed capital punishment as incompatible with human dignity and equal justice. People on death row are disproportionately Black, brown, and poor, and the death penalty has unequally targeted them.

The procedural protections this rule would dismantle are crucial to any notion of fairness in state-level post-conviction litigation. By eliminating federal competency and compensation standards for state-appointed capital counsel, removing the timeliness requirement for the appointment of that counsel, and rendering certifications permanent with no mechanism for revocation, the Proposed Rule will predictably result in states obtaining expedited federal habeas review, while providing condemned prisoners with inadequate representation.

The rule is also constitutionally and procedurally defective in ways the Department does not acknowledge. By vesting in the Attorney General—the nation's chief law enforcement officer—sole authority to certify the adequacy of states' mechanisms for provision of counsel in capital post-conviction proceedings, the statute and this rule create a structurally biased decisionmaker. See, e.g., Caperton v. A.T. Massey Coal Co., 556 U.S. 868 (2009); Marshall v. Jerrico, Inc., 446 U.S. 238 (1980). Concentrating in the Executive Branch the effective power to activate or withhold procedural rights in federal habeas proceedings also implicates separation-of-powers principles that reserve to the judiciary governance of its own proceedings. See U.S. Const. art. III, § 2. The Proposed Rule amplifies these embedded constitutional infirmities by compressing the decision timeline to 90 days, eliminating notice-and-comment on state applications, as well as removing any post-certification review. These changes truncate dramatically the record available to any reviewing court and further insulate the Attorney General's determinations from meaningful scrutiny.

Moreover, the Proposed Rule's elimination of mandatory public notice and comment on individual state certification requests is independently fatal. Notice and comment is the primary mechanism by which defense attorneys, civil rights organizations, affected prisoners, and the public can present evidence that a state's capital counsel system fails in practice. State officials will not volunteer any evidence that lawyers do not meet competency standards, compensation levels prevent the enrollment of competent counsel, or substantial delays in the appointment of counsel undermine their ability to provide adequate representation. Chapter 154 clearly requires a state's mechanism to operate the way it purports to. The Department's proposal to simply review a state's laws on their face improperly removes any burden from the state, even though Chapter 154 demands a meaningful quid pro quo for a state to obtain the benefits of expedited federal habeas proceedings.

The Department's claim that this Proposed Rule is compelled by the text of Chapter 154 is a post-hoc rationalization for a policy choice. The President and Attorney General have made clear that they wish to accelerate executions in this country. That choice is one the NLG categorically rejects. The NLG urges the Department to withdraw this Proposed Rule in its entirety.

NLG Statements

NLG's Commentary for the Congressional Record of June 9, 2026, Hearing, "The Southern Poverty Law Center: Manufacturing Hate, Part II"

The NLG submitted the following statement to the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary in condemnation of its attacks against Southern Poverty Law Center:

Pursuant to the 119th Congress Rules of Procedure of the Committee on the Judiciary, the NLG, the nation's largest and oldest progressive bar association, timely submits the following commentary for the congressional record of the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary's June 9, 2026, hearing, titled "The Southern Poverty Law Center: Manufacturing Hate, Part II." As a non-profit legal organization, the NLG submits this commentary with deep concern about the Legislature's weaponization of its processes against the constitutionally protected and socially essential work done by another non-profit legal organization, the Southern Poverty Law Center ("SPLC").

Public exposure and condemnation of far-right violence is a part of this country's genealogy. Despite concerted attempts to rewrite our country's history, we affirm that the social, cultural, and political growth of the U.S. has been in large part because of organizations committing to eradicating right-wing extremist ideologies and rebuking their supporters. Like NLG, SPLC has been one of the leading organizations in contemporary times dedicated to this work – and donors proudly fund these efforts. Indeed, for over five decades, SPLC has had a track record of publicly and fearlessly taking on white Christian Nationalist organizations, thereby advancing our collective liberties. However, just like the conservative pundits attempting to rewrite histories of chattel slavery and indigenous genocide, this Committee is attempting to rewrite the truth about SPLC's work. The reality is, without organizations like SPLC, all of us are less safe from the ever-growing threat of white supremacist violence.

Beyond the false accusations themselves, this Committee has engaged in a baseless inquisition through its powerful legislative processes. Reflecting the political motivation of the Committee's actions, its attacks against SPLC come at the heels of a concurrent federal prosecution. The Government's dubious indictment is being used as a backdrop for the administration's right-wing talking points to the media and right-wing blogosphere, including bizarre accusations that SPLC was funding neo-nazis to "grow their violent extremist organizations" and that it was funding false-flag operations. Considering the Department of Justice's actions, it appears that this Committee's goal is to muddy the narrative about SPLC and give cover to the Government's outrageous right-wing efforts.

As an almost 90-year-old legal organization, with its own history of surveillance, interference, and persecution at the hands of the federal government, NLG rebukes the targeted actions of the 119th Congress' Committee on the Judiciary. We know that the public will not forget the Department of Justice's attempts to chill organizations like SPLC or the House of Representatives' wilful abuse of power to enable such chilling efforts. The country is watching as this Committee engages in an anti-democratic playbook by weaponizing the Legislature to lend credibility to the Government's shaky accusations. It is clear that forcing SPLC's leadership in front of Congress is not about justice. It is about political intimidation.

In condemnation,
Sara Habbo
President-Elect, On behalf of the NLG

NLG Reaffirms its Solidarity with Cuba in the Face of Increasing McCarthyite Repression

On July 20, 2026, the State Department released a 100-page McCarthyite propaganda report bearing the name of Secretary of State Marco Rubio—a document that endeavours to serve as the ideological justification for an escalating assault on Cuba, the Cuba solidarity movement, and all political dissent on the left. The report casts a wide net of unfounded accusations, maliciously painting over 40 left-leaning social movement organizations

continued from previous page

and individuals as purported Cuban "front groups" while employing guilt-by-association tactics to smear even elected officials like Zohran Mamdani. It goes so far as to cite reports from the long discredited House Un-American Activities Committee, reviving Cold War conspiracy theories from the 1950s and repackaging them for the present.

As an organization that has stood in solidarity with the Cuban revolution from the outset and one that has been long targeted by the state for its principled positions, the NLG is proud to be named and written about extensively in this report. We wear this political targeting like a badge of honor, a sign that our work opposing US military and economic domination of other sovereign states has been effective.

Through this report, the State Department attempts to demonize and criminalize decades of broad-based organizing in solidarity with the Cuban revolution, its people, and what they have achieved. This movement has advocated to end the more than 60-year old U.S. economic and financial blockade against Cuba that has amounted to a crime against humanity and a slow genocide of the Cuban people. For many years, a Global Majority of states has voted to end this illegal and inhumane blockade through the U.N. General Assembly. Yet not only has the U.S. consistently ignored these votes, in the last several months it has intensified the blockade, denying Cuba vital fuel shipments, while increasing threats of regime change. In the face of this ongoing imperialist aggression, Cuba stands as a beacon of global solidarity and a living example that another world is possible.

This report is one of the latest actions taken by the Trump administration to criminalize and persecute groups that oppose the inhumane and illegal actions of U.S. fascism and imperialism,U.S. at home and around the world. Only days prior to issuing the report, Secretary Rubio and Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Homeland Security Advisor Stephen Miller hosted an international red-baiting conference at the State Department with representatives from dozens of states, focused on alleged "resurgence of far-left political terrorism" referring to left movements as "enemies of civilization".

The Trump administration is clearly consolidating its legal architecture of fascist repression, as seen in the recent Prairieland convictions and the ongoing trial against anti-ICE organizers in Minnesota, but also through a broader assault that includes the weaponization of OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control), which on June 4, 2026, designated Cuban President Díaz-Canel, ICAP, and the Amistur Travel Agency as SDNs (Specially Designated Nationals). The Trump administration has also begun issuing "Requests for Information" letters to organizers in order to chill travel and humanitarian work through threatened financial and criminal penalties, alongside the threatened deployment of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), historically used to target left-wing organizations. The combined effect of these tactics represents a coordinated campaign to silence all forms of dissent. These efforts are designed to chill solidarity speech, weaken collective organizing, fragment alliances, and coerce organizations and individuals into retreat.

We will not be silenced in the face of resurgent fascism. We will not be divided. We will not retreat. The more they attack our movement, the more determined we become. As members of the NLG, we pledge to continue to use our legal expertise and platform to expose the crimes of the U.S. empire, support the Cuba solidarity movement, and defend those targeted by the State in the face of this McCarthyite assault. We pledge to continue organizing as the NLG and together with our comrades in other organizations to end the genocidal U.S. blockade of Cuba and all forms of imperialist aggression towards Cuba. We pledge to continue sending delegations to support and learn from the incredible successes of the Cuban Revolution, delivering humanitarian aid, and amplifying the voices of the Cuban people. We pledge to defend our First Amendment rights against every attempt to criminalize anti-imperialist solidarity.

It is our right and responsibility as lawyers, legal workers, civil society organizations, and individuals in the Belly of the Beast to challenge this illegal and inhumane policy and uphold domestic and international law in furtherance of justice and people-centered human rights.

NLG Statements

NLG Calls for Greater Solidarity amidst Government Infiltration of Movements

Through the Trump administration's expansive National Security Presidential Memorandum-7 (NSPM-7), the federal government declared that it would "disband and uproot" groups that disagree with it. Based on fictions of leftist coordinated violence, former Attorney General Pam Bondi reiterated this in an internal memorandum, ordering collaboration with state-level law enforcement for the government's efforts. The White House then included in a sensational report, its 2026 Counterterrorism Strategy, that it would "prioritize the rapid identification and neutralization of violent secular political groups whose ideology is anti-American, radically pro-transgender, and anarchist" by using "law enforcement tools to cripple them operationally."

The extent and insidiousness of these tactics has come to light in Minneapolis. A discovery motion filed by a Minnesota 15 defendant has revealed the following:

- Operation Puppet Master, a "mass spying campaign" against social justice groups across Minneapolis. The operation involved undercover agents infiltrating groups and their communications, posing as "protesters or activists" in group chats and at "community meetings at churches, parks, libraries, union halls, schools and restaurants."

- Project Whipple Shield, an investigation against leftist groups to identify and disrupt their operations. Unions, non-profit organizations, and their finances fell under the dragnet of the federal government's surveillance and infiltrators.

- Undercover agents enticing people into committing crimes and providing financial information related to their organizing. The agents even showed up at numerous Minneapolis protests and group meetings that were unrelated to the investigation.

Government infiltration and surveillance of our movements are not new. Commentators have correctly compared these actions to the FBI's COINTELPRO efforts. NLG is starkly aware of these undemocratic practices, itself being a target of infiltration throughout its history.

Indeed, given the administration's and its supporters' clear targeting of the Guild, we assume that agents provocateurs already attend our events and panels. Through its multiple reports and publications, this federal government is clearly signaling that the reality in Minneapolis is occurring at a national level.

NLG calls for our members, allies, and supporters to remain in even greater solidarity with our movements and with each other. Although we should not give in to fear, paranoia, or disorder in our work, we must be cautious as opposition to fascism grows in the U.S. and our movements attract more people. We must lean deeper into our trusted networks by building authentic, in-person relationships. We keep us safe.

Beyond Bars Submissions

Litigation Update, by Nicholas J. Ely, #077049, Nebraska Dept. of Corrections

Dear NLG Reader,

I last wrote an article (Vol 50, No. 1, Winter 2025) concerning the retaliation I've been receiving from the prison administration for practicing my freedom of speech. After I published my first book and my wife released her podcast, the prison admin "indefinitely suspended" all phone calls, emails, and visits between us. This restriction began Nov. 18, 2024, and has remained in effect to the present moment.

This writing is to update you on the events that have occurred since then in hopes that if you're suffering from retaliation you'll see that people out there WILL help you. You are not alone.

After filing a pro se complaint in state court, I wrote a letter to the Flatwater Free Press and every other news or journalist organization I could find. After reviewing my civil complaint, the FFP decided to interview my wife about this retaliation and the article was published in the local newspapers across the state.

Media attention caught the interest of the First Amendment clinic - a group of lawyers and law students who work to defend the First Amendment - and they offered to represent me, pro bono. I gratefully accepted this offer, of course, and am now being represented by a group of lawyers who have my best interest at heart. They couldn't fathom the "indefinite suspension" of any/all communications between my wife and I over a podcast and book publishing.

My lawyers suggested we dismiss the state claim and that I allow them to polish it before filing a 1983 in federal court. So that's what we did.

As expected, the State filed a "Motion to Dismiss" but utilized Chat GPT to write their legal brief. Chat GPT is an artificial intelligence "chatbot" that is prone to making legal mistakes. And that's exactly what happened.

The State relied upon several case law decisions that did not support their assertions and misstated the Turner standard. It's apparent they used a chatbox to write their brief because no lawyer with ordinary training would make the mistakes that this legal team made.

After review of the complaint and both briefs, the judge overruled the Motion to Dismiss. We survived the first step and are now celebrating a small victory! The judge's decision appeared to be in favor and we've now moved into the stages of discovery while contemplating a preliminary injunction. I have no idea about how any of this will go or how it all works but I've treated this hardship as a learning experience and am grateful to have obtained the blueprint for any future violations.

This last year and a half was incredibly hard on my wife and I, as we're punished every time we communicate, but we've stayed strong and committed. My wife now has over 50 episodes released on her "More Than An Inmate's Girlfriend" podcast and she works with incarcerated people across the country to publish their writings, help connect with pen pals, and do graphic design work. Her website www. bestselfpublications. com is the result of the prison's retaliation against us. She chose to transmute her pain into a productive energy that helps other incarcerated people who may be suffering, as well.

As discovery unfolds, I'll keep you updated on our pending litigation … as I pray for the day when I'll again be free to associate with my wife without retaliation.

Thank you NLG, for your inspirational push, your time, your work and all your energy. It's much appreciated.

Beyond Bars Submissions

JHLs, Use Discovery!, by Nicholas Penland, Corcoran State Prison, CA

To all NLG members and to my JHL brothers and sisters:

As a JHL, are you using discovery effectively in your litigation? Do you even know what discovery is? Too many pro-se prisoner litigants, and even JHLs, have lost cases that they should have won because they failed to use discovery to get the proof they needed. In this submission I'm going to tell you about the three basic tools of discovery: Interrogatories, Request for Admissions, and Request for Production.

Interrogatories are questions you ask your opponents. Remember, your goal in using discovery is to get the evidence that you need to win your case. Ask only relevant questions and be as specific as possible: What are the names of the correctional officers who worked in Housing Unit A on (DATE)?". Interrogatories are not my personal favorite because the other side will almost certainly be represented by the state Attorney General's Office. The questions will not actually be answered by your opponent, they'll be answered by the lawyer representing them. Interrogatories are useful in some situations but you need to know when to use them.

Requests for Admissions are my favorite discovery tool. You ask your opponent to admit something. For example: "Admit that correctional officers are supposed to turn on their body camera when they begin their shifts"; "Admit that Officer Smith did not turn on his body camera when he began his shift"; "Admit that Officer Smith's body camera was not turned on when he entered Plaintiff's cell at 3:00pm on (DATE); "Admit that officer Smith's failure to turn on his body camera is a violation of the law and the policies of the Dept. of Corrections>" Do you see what I did? These statements are damaging to my opponents if admitted. If they are admitted as true by my opponents, then I'm on my way to winning. If they deny that these statements are true, and through the discovery tool of Request for Production of Documents/Video Footage I find out they lied, I can now prove to the court that my opponents just committed perjury (which is also a crime).

The last tool is Requests for Production. As a JHL you'll most likely be using Requests for Production of Documents and Requests for Production of Video Footage/Electronically Stored Information. This discovery tool is very straightforward and needs no lengthy explanation. You're asking for documents, files, reports, security camera footage, etc. in an effort to make your case.

You can make multiple requests of all these tools. If you sent a First Request for Production of Documents and a First Request for Admissions, and the admissions turn something up, you can send a Second Request for Production of Documents, and so on.

In closing, as a JHL it is vital that you understand your state's rules, laws, statutes, etc. related to discovery, and that you use discovery to your advantage. You have a duty, a moral obligation, to those you help to use every tool legally available to you. As a JHL you're going to be going up against the government, state or federal; a government with near-endless resources. All that stands between the fellow prisoners that you help and injustice, is you. Do not be afraid of going up against the government with all of the power of the law when you know that injustice has been, or is being, done.

Through your actions, tell the government that injustice will not stand.

Tell the government through fighting for others: "Be ye ever so high, the Law is above you."

Advocates, Advocate!, by Rayne Vylette, Dade C.I., Florida City, FL

What is the difference between a jailhouse lawyer and an advocate? According to the Gutenberg Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, there is no difference! Personally, I prefer to identify as an advocate, and perhaps you will, too. Let's begin with the definition:

- Advocate (n.) (from the Latin advocatus, meaning one summoned or called to another; also advocare, meaning to call to, call to one's aid) - 1) One who pleads the cause of another. 2) One who defends, vindicates, or espouses any cause by argument. 3) A lawyer who pleads cases in court. Note: In English and American law, advocate is the same as counsel, counselor, lawyer, or barrister.

- Advocate (v.) - 1) To plead in favor or. 2) To defend by argument before a tribunal or the public. 3) To support, vindicate, or recommend publicly.

I love that the word exists as both a noun and a verb, and I feel "advocate" can be interpreted more broadly than "jailhouse lawyer", though I'm called that as well. An advocate isn't only what I am, but also what I do, and one day, when I leave this place, it will still be both my "am" and "do". As an advocate, I don't only concern myself with legal matters, though I do use my knowledge of the law in my advocacy often. And since we love Latin so much, I thought it would be fun to share the plural of advocatus - which is advacati! How cool is that? Also, for you Harry Potter fans, another Latin word for counsel or advocate is "patronus". One who defends, indeed.

I've said that I interpret "advocate" broadly, and I'd like to explain why. In the 2021 edition of the Jailhouse Lawyer's Handbook, a jailhouse lawyer is defined as a prisoner who has educated him or herself on the legal system. One of the reasons I prefer "advocate" is that I don't allow these present circumstances to define me or limit me any more than necessary. This isn't only a calling for me, it has become part of my identity. As we all understand very well, words matter. I, like many of you, do educate myself, on an ongoing basis, about state and federal law, and about departmental policy and procedure. Even if I didn't advocate for others in here, I would feel that same education was necessary for me, as I continue to fight my case, and I struggle to survive this ever-changing battleground shrouded in concrete and steel. I don't only advocate for those of us inside. As an advocate I feel I have a greater responsibility to the communities I'm a part of, an obligation to show up in a more substantive way. For me, this personal ethos can often pull me in several directions. I find it gives my life meaning and purpose, leaving me fulfilled despite my circumstances. That's my advocacy, though. As has always been the case, you get to define your own advocacy and assume as much or as little responsibility as you'd like.

Finally, I'd like to share my advocacy with you to give you ideas about how to broaden or enrich your own. I'm a transgender woman who advocates for others like me, which means researching relevant case law in the law library and assisting others with the grievance process. Last month, I also responded with an 11-page response to request for comments concerning a Housing and Urban Development proposal for a rule change that would affect others like me. I ally myself with advocacy organizations like the Prisoner Correspondence Project and the Alyssa Rodriguez Center for Gender Justice. A good advocate needs good allies and connections. They keep me informed and support my efforts by connecting me with law firms willing to consider civil rights actions. I keep tabs on four separate grievances of my own, and spend hours on my appeals. For myself, I prepare to file my motion for post-conviction relief and my federal habeas corpus. I study "You and the Law" on Edovo and spread word to everyone I know to take some time to educate themselves. I help an older neighbor rewrite a motion he intends to file to include proper captions and spelling, but advise him to speak to a law clerk prior to filing because he intends to file in a court that no longer has jurisdiction. Also, this. Part of my advocacy compels me to connect with you, a community of advocates like me, and different. I've learned, like you've all learned, that we can't do this alone.

NATIONAL COALITION FOR PRISONER VOTING RIGHTS (NCPVR) Prisoner Voting Rights Interest Form

Who We Are:
NCPVR is working to ensure that current and formerly incarcerated citizens can vote in federal elections.

What We Are Doing:
We are building a national voting rights campaign and seeking individuals interested in voting rights advocacy, education, and potential litigation.

Name: _____

DOC/ID #: _____

Facility: _____

State: _____

Check All That Apply

☐ Currently Incarcerated

☐ Want to Vote

☐ Interested in Joining the Effort

Comments (Optional)

_____

_____

_____

Contact Permission

☐ I authorize NCPVR to contact me about voting rights efforts.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Return To:

National Coalition for Prisoner Voting Rights (NCPVR)
Attn: Legal Outreach Division
5707 S. Cass Ave. Unit 681
Westmont, Illinois 60559
www.ncpvr.us

The right to vote shall not be denied or abridged.

Outside Subscriptions for Incarcerated Members

News Inside is a free, award winning publication which is a compilation of criminal justice news from the Marshall Project (a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization that seeks to create and sustain a sense of national urgency about the U.S. criminal justice system). It is produced by Marshall Project editors and writers along with incarcerated contributors.

To subscribe, send your contact info:

Full name, Identification number
Name of Facility
Street Address or PO Box
City, State, Zip Code

To this address:

Attn: News Inside
The Marshall Project
156 West 56th Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10019

The Abolitionist is a bilingual (English/Spanish) publication dedicated to the strategy and struggle of abolition which was launched in 2004 by Critical Resistance, a national organization which seeks to build an international movement to end the prison industrial complex by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. It is free to prisoners and is supported by paid subscribers on the outside.

Two times per year, Critical Resistance prints different issues of The Abolitionist, exploring a range of topics. From analyses of racial capitalism and imperialism, to housing, education, land struggles, mental health, confronting gender violence, fights to build life-affirming infrastructure for community self-determination and more, each issue is packed with fresh analytical articles, reflections, poetry, visual art, and organizing resources and tools for resistance inside and outside of prisons.

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Oakland, CA 94609

In federal prisons, the grievance system is designed to reject nearly all complaints about medical care - by Brian Nam-Sorenstein, March 24, 2026

The Prison Policy Initiative (P.O. Box 127, Northampton, MA 01061) is a national organization that produces cutting edge research to expose the harms of mass incarceration. They send in a quarterly newsletter containing all of their publications and will mail incarcerated people any titles they would like to read. They welcome requests for national or state-level data on a range of issues related to mass incarceration including (but not limited to) probation/parole, prison/jail population data and more.

In federal prisons, the grievance system is designed to reject nearly all complaints about medical care. We analyzed data about formal complaints made by incarcerated people regarding medical care in federal prisons and can only conclude that grievance systems are designed to thwart nearly every one.

When incarcerated people face abuse and mistreatment, they can typically file a formal complaint with jail or prison administrators. In federal prisons, the system for resolving these complaints is known as the "Administrative Remedy Program," but it's more commonly referred to as a "grievance system" in state prisons and local jails. Grievance systems are supposed to provide incarcerated people with a way to challenge issues they face behind bars — such as inadequate medical care, harassment by corrections officers, or unsanitary living conditions — and (hopefully) receive some kind of relief. In practice, however, incarcerated people who turn to grievance systems are forced to run a gauntlet of rules and regulations just to be heard, and very rarely succeed. This is especially true when it comes to medical complaints: our analysis of a decade of data from the Data Liberation Project finds that, **between 2014 and 2024, a startling 98% of medical grievances were rejected** for reasons ranging from the bureaucratic (such as using the wrong size sheet of paper) to the substantive (actually being denied on the merits of the complaint). Less than 1% of medical cases ended in a grant of relief.

A functioning grievance system is an important lifeline for incarcerated people, who have very little leverage to affect their circumstances. It's especially important for health-related matters, given that incarcerated people suffer from illness and disease at rates far exceeding that of the general public, and their access to medical care is highly constrained and notoriously awful. But in the end, a system does what it is designed to do, not what it is intended to do, and the federal grievance system rejects nearly every medical complaint filed by incarcerated people, often for vague or trivial reasons.

In this briefing, we examine the statuses of nearly 66,000 medical grievances from across the Bureau of Prisons to determine what kinds of medical complaints are most common in the federal system and how incarcerated people fare in their pursuit of relief.

The federal prison grievance system is designed to shut down complaints

Major segments of the U.S. population struggle to obtain basic medical care, but incarcerated people face especially challenging barriers and limitations such as the inability to choose doctors, get second opinions, or continue treatments prescribed prior to their incarceration. Conditions are so bad on the inside that since 2000, roughly half of all state prison systems have been court-ordered to improve mental and medical healthcare.
The sheer volume of correctional healthcare lawsuits reflects how ineffective prison grievance systems are for incarcerated people. After all, grievance systems should help people address their concerns so that neither side has to engage in costly, time-consuming litigation. Instead, grievance systems gatekeep actual opportunities for

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accountability in the courts.

The federal Bureau of Prisons' grievance system, in the simplest terms, works like this:

1. **Informal resolution**: An incarcerated person must first attempt to resolve their complaint informally by speaking directly to the person with whom they have an issue. As one might imagine, this first hurdle can easily dissuade people from pursuing their complaint for fear of retaliation — especially when that person works for the prison.

2. **Formal resolution**: If they can't informally resolve the issue, an incarcerated person can file a formal complaint with the warden, who is supposed to investigate and respond. To do this, the incarcerated person must overcome tedious administrative hurdles for their complaint to even be considered, including adhering to short deadlines and specific requirements like using the correct paper size, attaching the right number of copies, or using the right form (of which there are many).

3. **Appeals**: If the warden denies the grievance or fails to resolve it, the incarcerated person can first appeal to the regional office and, if denied or unresolved again, can appeal to the central office.

4. **Lawsuits**: Due to restrictions imposed under the Prison Litigation Reform Act, this administrative system must be completely exhausted before an incarcerated person can file a lawsuit in court to compel relief.

So, how far do complaints about medical care make it through this system? Our analysis of federal medical grievance data provides a snapshot (as of May 2024) of the statuses of nearly 66,000 complaints filed between January 2014 and January 2024. At the time the data were exported, nearly one-third (32%) of all medical complaints had been rejected because they were "improperly filed" according to one administrative rule or another; another 51% had been closed upon appeal for administrative reasons. In particular, the dental and mental health grievance categories had the highest rates of these rejections: 78% of dental and 83% of mental health grievances were tossed out for administrative reasons, including cases that had reached the appeals stage.

The data snapshot reveals that just 14% of all medical grievances over the decade made it past these administrative tests only to be denied on the actual merits of the complaint. Here, again, mental health and dental-related categories had the highest percentage (20%) of cases denied relief. Remarkably and disturbingly, zero grievances pertaining to pregnancy, abortion, or childcare in this decade-long dataset were granted relief. Meanwhile, the categories of "other forced medical treatment" and "forced psychotropic medication" had zero cases that were even accepted for consideration.

Contrast this with the victories: Only 1% of cases over the decade had a status indicating they were granted relief. This amounts to a grand total of just 940 cases out of 65,712. While the dataset doesn't include details on those outcomes, relief is typically specific to the grievance. For example, if a person files a grievance because they were denied a particular medication, they might seek relief in the form of access to that medication.

As the data show, federal prisons don't reject most grievances on the merits. Instead, most are rejected because incarcerated people fail to navigate administrative rules for submitting complaints, so their grievances are never actually judged on their merits.

Why are so many complaints rejected on technicalities? Put simply, many of the rules and requirements that gov-

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ern the grievance process are difficult for incarcerated people to meet. Prison officials control the time and movement of incarcerated people, which can hinder their ability to access the necessary forms and submit complaints to the right person in a timely manner. They also restrict the type and amount of property people can keep in their cells, including writing tools and materials they would need to fill out grievance forms. Add to this the typically lower levels of educational attainment and literacy among incarcerated people compared to the general population, and it becomes obvious that the various confusingly-named forms, rules about single-subject complaints, prohibitions on third-party assistance, and other highly specific rules work to thwart most grievances before they're ever considered on their merits. Other requirements, like requiring attempted informal resolutions as a first step, may sound reasonable in the abstract but can quickly dissuade incarcerated people who might fear retaliation for speaking up, especially in abusive situations. On top of all of this, those filing medical grievances are dealing with unresolved medical issues as they fight to receive basic dignified care.

In the dataset, each case can have up to five reasons explaining why it was rejected and/or closed. We tabulated the most common reasons for rejection given across cases to find that:

- 2 in 5 reasons for rejection pertained to various paperwork issues (such as failing to provide a copy of a particular form, using the wrong size paper, illegible writing or different wordings across forms, failing to write separate appeals for each incident report, or the grievance was filed to the wrong place/person).
- 1 in 10 reasons claimed the complainant failed to first exhaust all other, informal avenues for resolution.
- 1 in 12 (8%) reasons pointed to a failure to adhere to time limits for initial complaints and appeals.

The remaining reasons were a mix of withdrawn complaints, repetitive filings, rejections for subjects that are not appealable or "not sensitive issues," or because the complaint allegedly contained "obscene language."
Are grievance systems designed to solve problems, or deter lawsuits?

In theory, grievance procedures are an important tool for incarcerated people to pursue fair treatment and defend themselves in a system designed to disempower them. This power is particularly important in the context of medical care, where needs are widespread and urgent, and where failure to meet them can lead to injury, illness, and death. In practice, however, the grievance system is a black hole, a time-waster, and a deterrent to complaining at all. It's a long and winding maze of rules and technicalities that must be cleared before an incarcerated person can get their complaint to a setting that might actually force a change: the courts.

As we explain in our report, Cut-rate Care, prison healthcare often functions in a similar way, denying and delaying care until the incarcerated person either (1) becomes so frustrated that they give up, (2) pursues their complaint all the way to an improbable success in the courts, or (3) is released or dies. With nearly 100% of medical grievances rejected or denied, it's hard not to see the federal grievance system as a process designed to block or discourage complaints and lawsuits rather than a meaningful path for relief, protection, or accountability.
At minimum, prison grievance systems should be operated independently, not run by prison administrators, and incarcerated individuals' complaints should carry more weight, be easier to file, and lead to more meaningful and rapidly-delivered relief than they currently do.

Punishment Beyond Prisons 2026: Incarceration and Supervision by State - by Leah Wang, April 2026

The U.S. confines nearly 2 million people in prisons, jails, and detention centers, a fact which we only know by piecing together data from siloed parts of the criminal legal system. But even this number does not capture the full picture of the U.S. system of mass punishment, which ensnares 5.5 million people in incarceration, community supervision, and other forms of control and surveillance.

The vast majority of people in the mass punishment system are on community supervision, either under probation (3 million people) or parole (536,000 people). Yet these massive systems do not receive nearly as much attention as incarceration despite their broad harms and high failure rates. Policymakers and the public must understand how deeply linked these systems are to mass incarceration to ensure that these "alternatives" to incarceration aren't simply expanding it. To that end, this report is designed to help state policymakers and the public assess the scale and scope of their entire correctional systems.

This edition of Punishment Beyond Prisons also features two new additions: First, we include an overview of confinement and supervision population trends over the past fifty years, to show how incarceration and its purported "alternatives" have grown in lockstep with one another. Second, we draw attention to an expansive form of correctional control that is typically overlooked in discussions of punishment and/or reform: public registries listing people with sex-related convictions. These perspectives take the concept of mass punishment even further across time and space, giving advocates a stronger foundation for their work.

It's important to note that our analysis does not include confinement systems that cannot be broken down at the state level, such as immigration confinement or military prisons. We also discourage comparisons of data in this report to prior editions, because the data for different systems vary in their consistency from year to year.

States of mass punishment

By our calculations, 1 in 61 people nationwide are under some form of "correctional control." To get a sense of how massive community supervision systems are, consider: If the number of people under probation and parole alone were its own state, it would be roughly the size of Connecticut, and more populous than 21 other states and D.C.

And while the massive scale of probation is more than five times the size of the parole population, there are nearly as many people on parole as there are in the United States' 3,000-plus local jails. At the state level, seeing rates of probation and parole together with incarceration and confinement rates provides a more accurate and complete picture of punishment. Notably, some states with comparatively low incarceration rates appear much more punitive when we add other types of correctional control to the picture.

Among the 50 states and D.C., California ranks 44th in mass punishment, subjecting 907 per 100,000 of its residents to confinement or community supervision. Looking at mass punishment rates by state, we find that:

- In nearly every state, more than half of people under correctional control are on community supervision; in 20 states, more than two-thirds are on probation or parole rather than behind bars.

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- Residents of Colorado are more than twice as likely to be within the mass punishment system (1,919 per 100,000 residents) as those in neighboring Utah (901 per 100,000).

- Georgia has long led the nation in its use of probation (a staggering rate of 3,272 per 100,000 residents), but also has a top-ten incarceration rate (848 people in prisons and jails per 100,000), making it the most punitive state by a long shot.

- Louisiana uses all forms of punishment at consistently high rates, with similarly high rates of prison and jail incarceration, parole, and probation

Widening the net of social control: Fifty years of probation and parole

Community supervision populations nationwide have generally been shrinking for the past 15 years, driven by changes in probation. But over a longer timeframe, the use of both parole and probation have actually ballooned to the point of being commonplace. In other words, the era of mass supervision began in parallel with the more well-known era of mass incarceration. Unsurprisingly, the same tough-on-crime policies that led to a drastic increase in imprisonment also brought millions of people into the "net" of "formal social control" — that of supervision, and particularly probation

We compiled incarceration and supervision data from as early as the 1970s and found that these populations climbed precipitously throughout the 1980s and '90s, with all populations finally peaking around 2007. At that point, they started inching downward until the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend. Over the last ten years of data collection (2013 to 2023), the probation population has dropped by nearly 22% — the equivalent of over 880,000 people — with most of the drop happening in 2020 and 2021. This change, however, had more to do with pandemic-related changes to the criminal legal system's capacity than any significant change in policy. After this shock to the system subsided, probation trends reversed course, growing again between 2021 and 2023. At most recent count, a few states have greater supervision levels now than ever before:

- Arkansas's probation population is the largest it's ever been, with over 50,000 people in 2023.
- Montana and Nevada's probation populations peaked in 2022 (and dipped only marginally in 2023).
- Utah's probation population reached a record high in 2023.

If these populations continue to climb, they will return to peak levels in a few years' time, again reflecting an overuse of probation rather than any shift away from punitive measures. Meanwhile, jail, prison, and parole populations remain at elevated levels compared to decades prior, suggesting the era of mass punishment is far from over.

It's important to note that changes in probation and parole populations over time are not inherently good or bad; they can result from a wide range of reforms throughout the criminal legal system. For example, growth — particularly in parole rates — may signify that states are moving people out of prisons. Declining supervision rates would be an intended outcome of policies lowering barriers to successful supervision completion, like reducing the number of conditions or the use of carceral sanctions for violations. In our two-part report on parole systems, we explain that parole hearings and releases have been slowing down in dozens of states, lowering parole rates as people remain locked up instead. Understanding changes in individual state policy or practice (which is beyond the scope of this report, though we provide a few impactful examples later on) will provide context to these trends.

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Probation and parole do not "work" — in fact, they often lead to incarceration

Time and again, we've explained why community supervision tends to be poorly designed as a way to balance accountability with connecting people to the services and treatment they need to achieve stability. There are two primary ways that parole and probation set people up to fail:

- Both probation and parole impose an excessive number of conditions on people that can be nearly impossible to comply with all the time;
- When someone on supervision is accused of violating a condition — particularly through behaviors that are not crimes — they are often incarcerated as a response, which only further destabilizes their lives.

And "failure" is indeed common: Only about 43% of people successfully completed a term of probation, and 56% completed parole, in 2023.

Conditions. People under supervision and their loved ones know all too well that the conditions imposed on them are numerous, make daily activities difficult, and are sometimes irrelevant. In a prior report where we analyzed the "standard conditions" of probation, we found that conditions often make reentry harder and conflict with one another. For example, typical conditions like curfews, travel restrictions, and prohibiting certain establishments can severely limit employment or educational opportunities — even though maintaining full-time employment or study is almost always mandatory. Supervision fees are also a poorly-conceived condition: Although people on probation are statistically some of the poorest, monthly fees that can be several hundred dollars force them to choose between necessities like rent, supporting dependents, and staying in compliance with their supervision.

Living under the thumb of community supervision means constant scrutiny from parole and probation officers, from regular phone calls and check-ins to surprise visits at home or work. These interactions often lead to the detection of behaviors that are considered violations, like breaking a curfew. Instead of connecting their clients with resources to help to address underlying issues, supervision officers and other system actors often use their significant discretion to issue harsh and inequitable sanctions, including incarceration. And while the average probation term averages about two years, parole supervision can last far longer, if not indefinitely

Violations. Of the 1.9 million "exits" from supervision in 2023, over 125,000 people were put back behind bars for breaking a rule, not as a result of a new criminal sentence. In many cases, people are incarcerated on alleged violations, and must wait behind bars for the whole revocation process to play out. At a more granular level, some states' incarceration data reveals a very alarming reliance on incarceration as a violation sanction. For example:

- Nearly 1 in 3 people in Idaho's local jails were held on alleged parole violations in mid-2025.

- In Utah, people with probation violations are being sentenced to jail at a higher rate than ever before, and the increase is not fully explained by a shift toward higher-risk individuals in the probation population.

- According to annual reports from Hawaii's parole board, over 99% of returns to prison for parole violations during fiscal year 2024 were for technical violations.

- A multi-site study of probation jurisdictions found that more than 1 in 10 jail admissions involved a probation violation. Importantly, people detained for a probation violation had a length of stay that was longer

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than those without a violation in every jurisdiction. In some cases, the length of stay was nearly 50 to 60 times longer

To find those most impacted by supervision, look to society's most marginalized groups

It's important to understand how community supervision extracts the most wealth, stability, and autonomy from people on the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. For example, supervision disproportionately impacts Black Americans: over 30% of the community supervision population is Black, despite Black people making up only 14% of the overall population. Research shows that probation can drive rising jail populations through the racially-disparate imposition of probation conditions and rearrests of Black people on probation. People on probation and/or parole are also in demonstrably poorer health than the general public, reporting higher rates of mental illness, chronic conditions, and substance use disorders.

For women, compliance with the rigid rules and schedules of supervision is nearly impossible. Anything involving travel and program participation can be particularly difficult due to family caregiving obligations, such as finding or paying for child- or elder-care. And the vast majority of women on probation have limited access to abortion care due to their state's laws and movement restrictions. Finally, unhoused or housing-insecure people may find themselves in violation of a standard condition requiring a residential address, but they are also likely to have trouble finding stable housing if association restrictions extend to people with whom they would consider living. (Unhoused people are also more likely to interact with police, and contact with law enforcement must typically be reported to supervision officers.)

Only sweeping change can make community supervision a true alternative to incarceration

Our analysis of state punishment systems, along with decades of research and advocacy, finds that probation and parole are double-edged swords: They could be important tools for moving and keeping people out of harmful correctional facilities, but they are currently designed to anticipate failure rather than success, resulting in a "revolving door" to prisons and jails at significant cost to families and taxpayers.

Probation: Reduce caseloads and prioritize treatment and services

It is time for every jurisdiction to reduce and rethink its use of probation. When probation is reserved for people who are at a high risk of committing a crime and who require the most support, the savings derived from a smaller probation population can allow for reinvestment in voluntary, community-based services that address social or health concerns (such as drug use or homelessness) that are too often criminalized.

In addition to substantially reducing the use of probation, jurisdictions must also dial back the excessive number of standard and "special" conditions imposed on people. (To find out the standard probation conditions in your jurisdiction, see this comprehensive table we compiled in 2024.) At the same time, probation terms must be capped, and violations must be dealt with fairly.

States have been chipping away at the harms and overuse of probation. For example:

- In 2025, Virginia passed bipartisan measures that make it easier to reduce probation terms by helping people secure housing, employment, healthcare, and other key components of stability, rather than imposing irrelevant and burdensome conditions on them.
- In 2023, Pennsylvania's Act 44 became law, overhauling one of the most punitive probation systems in the

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country. The new law limits incarceration for non-criminal violations, uses an individualized approach to setting conditions, and allows for termination of supervision for those who no longer need it.
- In 2022, a diverse coalition of Florida lawmakers transformed probation through Senate Bill 752, which created remote reporting options and implemented credit systems to reduce probation terms through education or employment.

Parole: Pare down conditions and expand opportunities for success in the community

Astute readers will point out that we recently put out a report, Parole in Perspective, which highlights the woeful decline in the use of parole in most states, and argues that more people should be released on parole. Indeed, the "front end" of parole should be a functional release mechanism for people who can demonstrate readiness to succeed in the community. States should focus on making the "back end" of parole functional as well — reducing the overall burden of conditions, capping the length of parole terms, and mitigating collateral consequences, which will stem the tide of supervision-related admissions to prisons.

For advocates who are not sure where to start, the Prison Policy Initiative and MacArthur Justice Center's National Parole Transformation Project teamed up to publish a set of Parole Principles that offer policy guidance for any state, no matter the circumstances of their current parole system. Several dozen organizations have signed onto the Principles, which state that parole supervision should:

- Have few (if not zero) conditions, and allow for the removal or modification of conditions;
- Allow multiple options for checking in with parole officers to limit disruptions to work and other obligations, and minimize the chance of violating conditions; and
- Not be indefinite: The length of supervision should be proportional to the original sentence, but no longer than five years.
-

And those facing an alleged violation of parole should be guaranteed that:

- They will not be put behind bars for non-criminal conduct, particularly as they await a hearing; and

- If supervision is ultimately revoked, there must be a cap on the length of time to be served, and it should be proportionate to the seriousness of the violation.

Fortunately, states are realizing that parole should not feed into prison populations. For example, New Jersey's Substance Abuse Recovery and Supervision Accountability Act, introduced in late 2025, would ensure that non-criminal violations of parole, such as a positive drug test, do not automatically lead to reincarceration. And New Mexico passed a bill in 2025 eliminating one of the most insidious conditions of parole: monthly fees, totaling up to $1,800 per year.

Conclusion

Wherever possible, jurisdictions should be reducing the use of incarceration and confinement, which tears apart communities and families. But this report shows where each state falls within the national landscape of mass punishment, including the overly used and poorly designed systems of probation and parole. Our state-specific breakdowns suggest where state advocates and policymakers might start when developing proposals for meaningful justice reform, especially when probation and parole feed people right back into incarceration.

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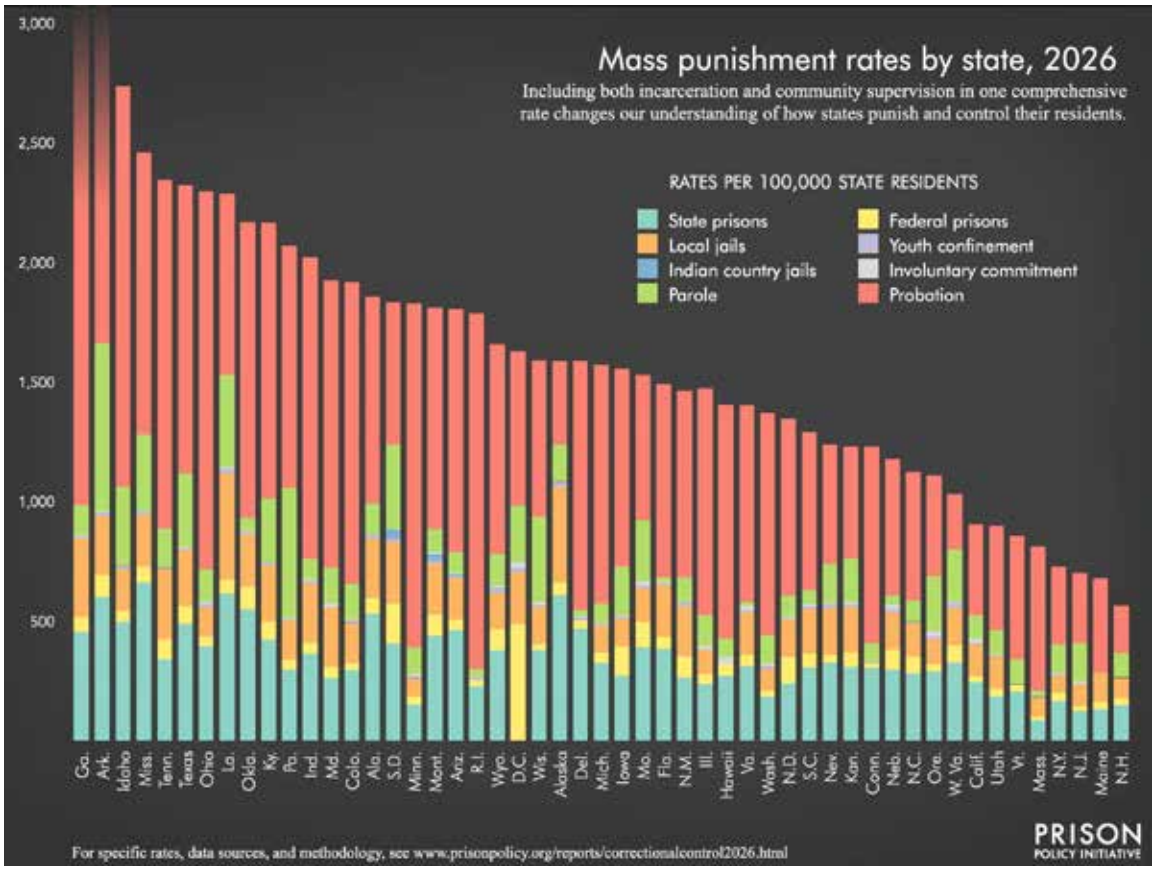

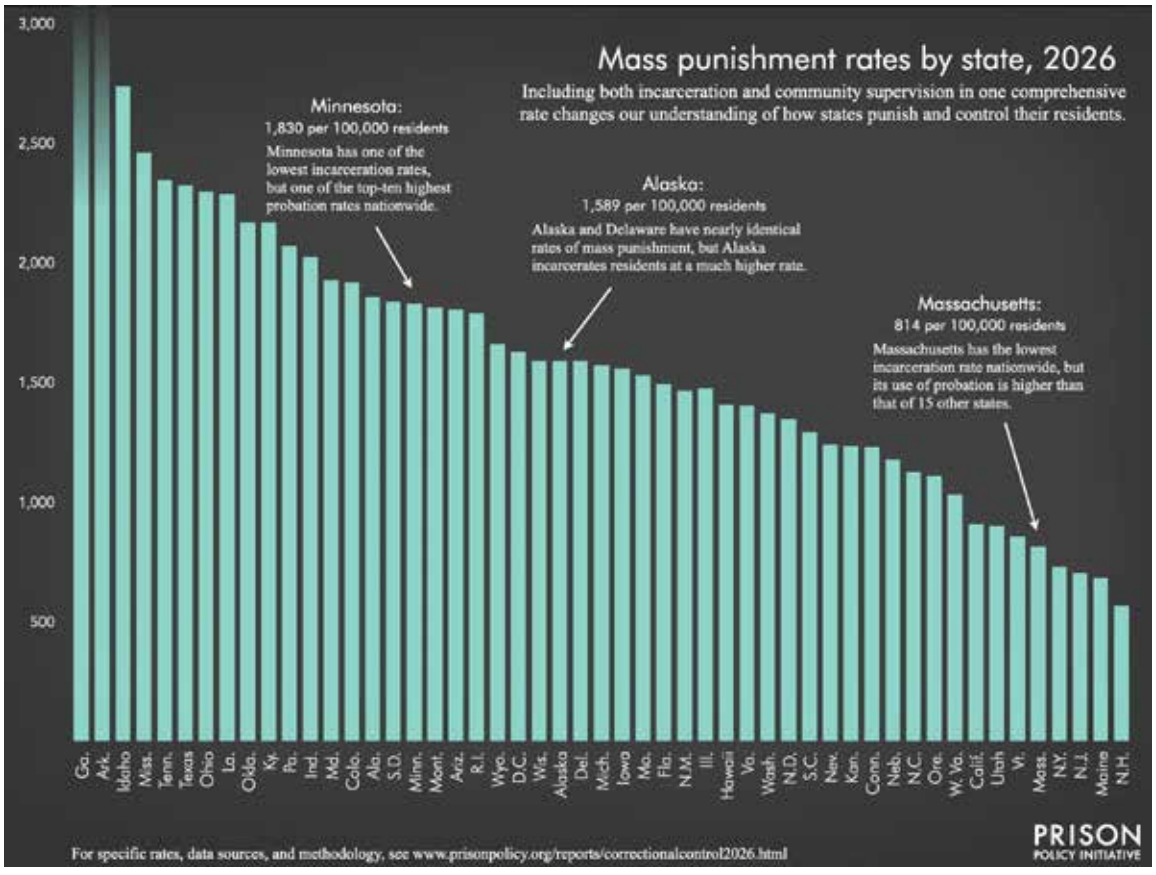

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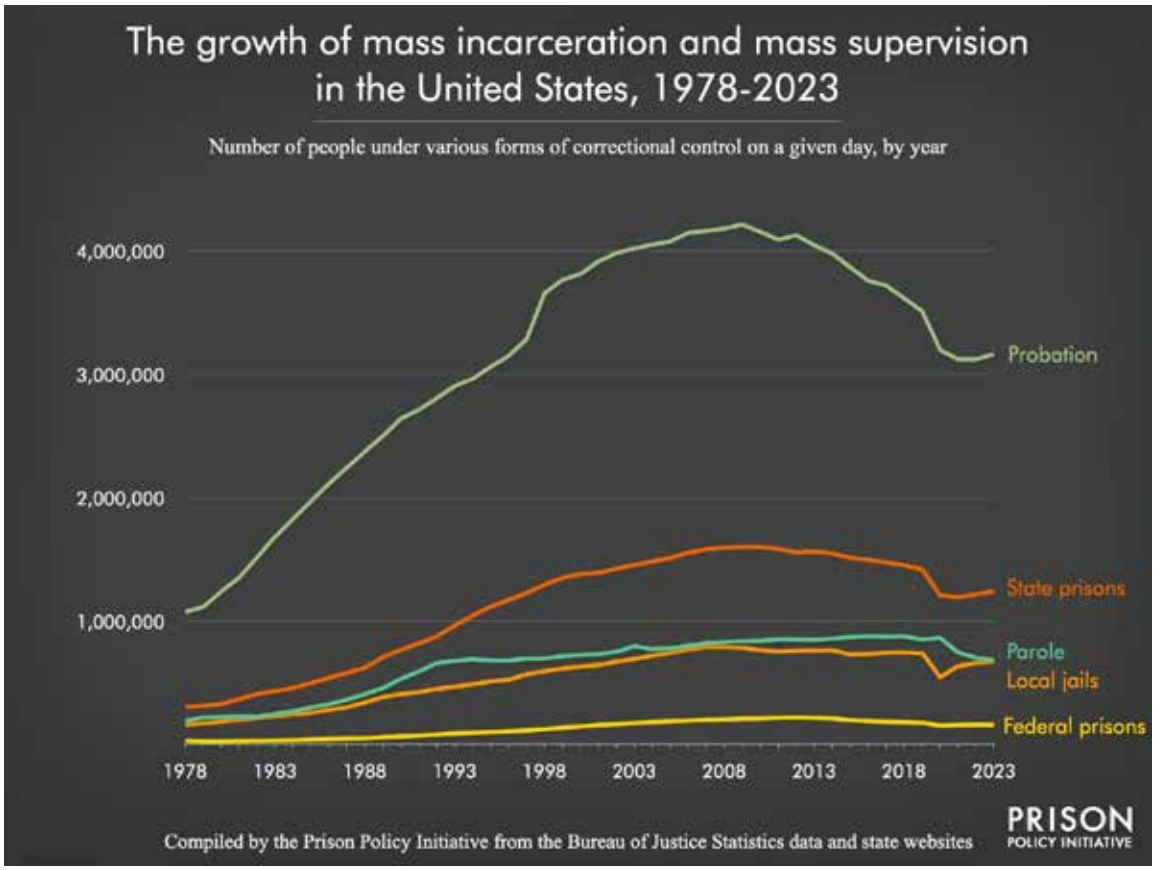

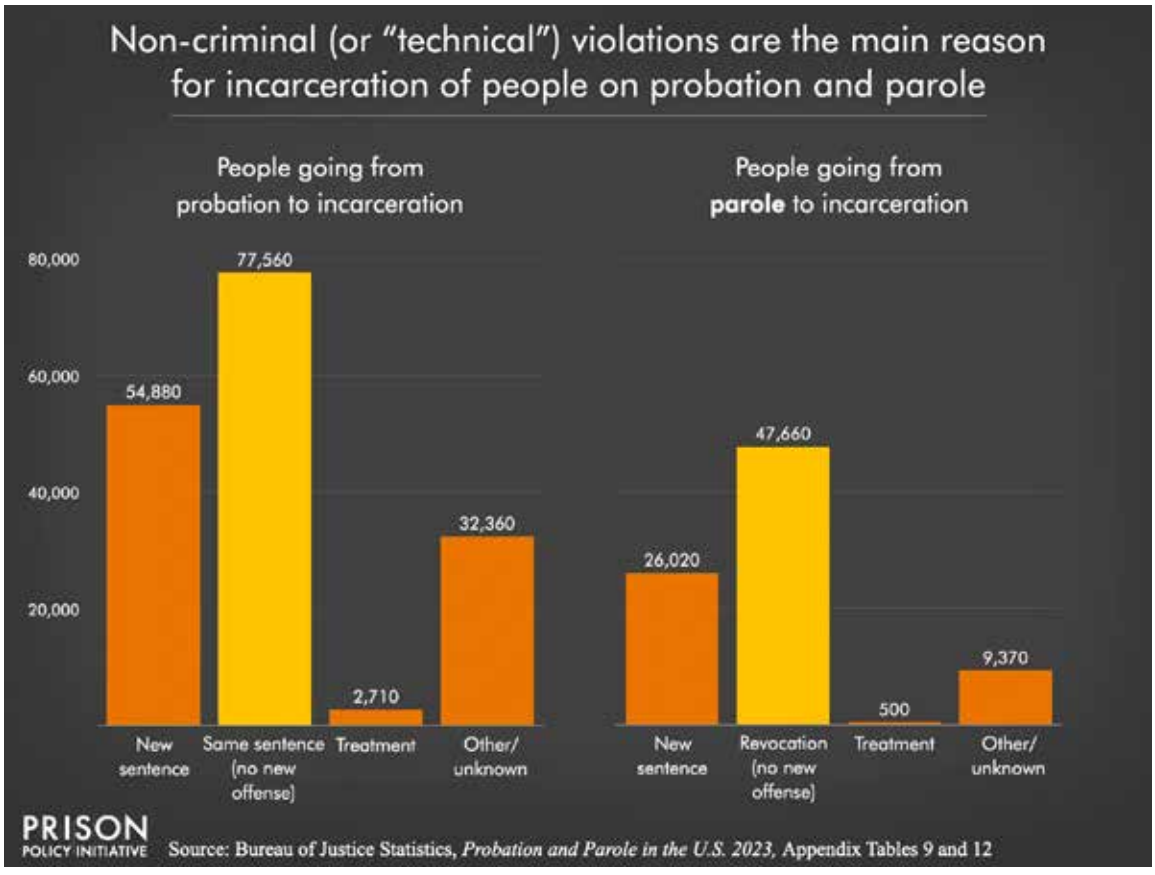

The following pages are a listing of legal resources available from Midwest Books to Prisoners that anyone incarcerated can request, using the address provided.

Free Legal Resources

We will send free legal materials upon request. This catalog is a small selection of what we have available. We are not able to provide legal advice or representation or perform personal tasks. However, we can - within reason - help with basic legal research and print publicly available documents such as laws or court rulings. As always, you can also request books/magazines by genre. Write to request:

Midwest Books to Prisoners (Legal)
1321 N Milwaukee Ave PMB 460
Chicago, IL 60622

Last Update August 4, 2025.

• **Insider's Guide to Jailhouse Law** (11/2024): Formerly "We The People", this guide published by Prison Book Program is a general overview, basic legal dictionary, and national directory of legal and advocacy organizations. También en Español
• **Jailhouse Lawyer's Handbook** (2021, 6th Edition) Published by The Center for Constitutional Rights and the National Lawyers Guild, instructions on filing a federal lawsuit addressing poor conditions in prison or abuse by prison staff
• **A Tilted Guide to Being a Defendant (2017)** facing charges based on personal, political and legal goals. (Also see the shorter zine version *"Criminal Legal System for Radicals"*)

Monthly "Legal Updates" Newsletter

Write us to subscribe to the free monthly newsletter with current articles from Solitary Watch, Prison Policy Initiative, Law Professor Blogs, Truthout, Injustice Watch, Jailhouse Lawyers Speak, and more. You can also request a custom newsletter choosing your own topics and sources.

South Chicago ABC:

• "Handbook for the Wrongfully Convicted - pt 1, 2 and Table of Authorities" (Eric D Smith)
• "Criminal Law Concepts (Michael Salerno
• "Criminal Law Forms" (Michael Salerno)
• "Federal Habeas Corpus for State Prisoners (Michael Salerno)
• "How to Use the Law Library Write Your Own Law Work" (Michael Salerno)
• "Anarchist Litigation for Dummies" (Gary William Hallford)
• "Dont Shank The Guards Handbook: Legal Recourseto Guards' Harassment, Brutality and Rape (Kevin Rashid Johnson)
• "Handbook on Surviving Solitary Confinement: A Survival Guide for the Targeted Prisoner"- Khalfani Malik Khaldun
• "Martin Sostre in Court"

Other Publications

• "Prison Activist Resource Center: National Prisoner Resource Directory" (Nov 2024)
• "Handbook of Legal Terminology" (4th Ed 2020 Mississippi Judicial College)
• "Jailhouse Laywers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners vs. the U.S.A." (2009 Mumia Abu-Jamal)
• "If An Agent Knocks (2020, Center for Constitutional Rights)
• "Repress This! Ways to Be Your Own Anti-Repression Committee" (2014)
• "Bad Behavior: How prison disciplinary policies manufacture misconduct (Prison Policy Initiative, 2024)
• "A Matter of Life: The Scope and Impact of Life and Long Term Imprisonment" (2025, Sentencing Project)
• "Captive Labor: Exploitation of Incarcerated Workers" (2022, ACLU)
• "Standards for Library Services for the Incarcerated or Detained (2024 Edition)" (American Library Association)
• "Business & Legal Toolkit for Returning Citizen Entrepreneurs" (2020, GW Law School)
• "No Justice, No Pleas: Subverting Mass Incarceration Through Defendant Collective Action
• Civil Commitment for Sex Offenses packet (IL and National reports, 2022)
• "A Practical Security Handbook" (2025, No Trace Project)
• "Threat Library": counter-surveillance, forensics and mitigations (2025 No Trace Project)
• "Peer-to-Peer, Encryption, and Tor: New Communication Infrastructure"
• "Your Life On The List: A Survival Guide for those Forced to Register Upon Release" (4th ed. 2024)
• "Children Are Different: Implicit Bias, Rehabilitation, And The New Juvenile Jurisprudence (2013 Robin W Sterling)
• "White Paper on the Science of Late Adolescence: A Guide for Judges, Attorneys, and Policy Makers"
• "Trial Manual for Defense Attorneys in Juvenile Delinquency Cases (2012 NYU School of Law)
• "Effective Communication For Commutations: A Teacher's Guide" (2018 Prison Renaissance)

LGBTQ

• "Built Binary: Rethinking the Incarceration of Transgender Individuals Within a Dual-Gendered Prison System"
• "Policies to Increase Safety and Respect for Transgender Prisoners" (Natl Center for Transgender Equality)
• "Still We Rise: Trans Resources" (TGI Justice Project 2017)
• "LGBTQ Books to Prisoners Packet" (Resource List, Trans, Terms, Coming Out, Safer Sex Inside)

Columbia Jailhouse Lawyers Manual

13th Edition. Updated Summer 2024.
Request by individual chapters

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Ch 1: How to Use the JLM and How To Use It

Section II: Learning Your Rights
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Ch 3: Your Right to Learn the Law and Go to Court

Section III: How to File a Lawsuit and Learn About Your Case
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Ch 5: Choosing a Court and a Lawsuit
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Ch 13: Federal Habeas Corpus

Section V: How to Attack the Conditions of Your Imprisonment
Ch 14: The Prison Litigation Reform Act
Ch 15: Incarcerated Grievance Procedures
Ch 16: Using 42 U.S.C. § 1983 to Obtain Relief from Violations of Federal Law
Ch 17: The State's Duty to Protect You and Your Property: Tort Actions
Ch 18: Your Rights At Prison Disciplinary Proceedings
Ch 19: Your Right to Communicate with the Outside World

Section VI: How to Attack Your Conviction, Sentence, or Prison Conditions at the State Level
Ch 20: Using Article 440 of the New York Criminal Procedure Law to Attack Your Unfair Conviction or Illegal Sentence
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Ch 22: How to Challenge Administrative Decisions Using Article 78 of the New York Civil Practice Law and Rules

Section VII: General Health and Safety Rights in Prison
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Ch 25: Your Right to be Free from Illegal Body Searches
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Ch 31: Security Classification and Gang Validation
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Ch 37: Rights Upon Release
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Section IX: Appendices
Appendix I: Addresses of Federal Courts & New York State Prisons and Their Respective Federal Judicial Districts
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Appendix IV: Directory of Legal and Social Services for Incarcerated People
Appendix V: Definitions of Words Used in the JLM
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Constitutional Rights of Prisoners (9th ed.,2010)

Ch. 1 - An Overview of the Judicial System
Ch. 2 - Administrative Law
Ch. 3 - Use of Force; Use of Corporal Punishment to Enforce Prison Discipline
Ch. 4 - Prisoners' Rights to Visitation/Association; Searches
Ch. 5 - Prisoners' Rights to Use of the Mail, Internet and Telephone
Ch. 6 - Isolated Confinement—"The Hole" and Administrative Segregation
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Ch. 11 - Additional Litigation
Ch. 12 - Parole & Probation
Ch. 13 - Litigation against Government and Individuals
Ch. 14 - The Prison Litigation Reform Act
Ch. 15 - Selected Federal Statutes Affecting Prisoners

Illinois

• "Pretrial Fairness Act" end cash bail booklet: the full law, court rulings, & implementation flow charts
• "The New Stop and Frisk"? Chicago Gun Stops (2024 Injustice Watch)
• "Mapping Your Future" (2025 Illinois Re-entry Guide by Education Justice Project - Tambien en Español)
• "Local Rules of the United States District Court Northern District of Illinois" (Federal, June 2025)
• Illinois DOC Medical Lawsuit / Consent Decree (Lippert v Jeffreys)
• Starting a case to appeal a criminal conviction in Illinois (assorted articles and forms)
• "Ending Torture by Solitary Confinement (2025 Illinois report by Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights)
• "The Chicago Police Torture Scandal: A Legal And Political History" (2015 People's Law Office)
• "IL Civil Practice Guide" (Jenner & Block, 2024)
• "Higher Education in Prison Programs in Illinois" (Education Justice Project 2024)
• "Finding Illinois law: A Librarian's Guide for Non-Lawyers" (2012)
• "CPD Enforcement On False Reports (OIG 2023)
• Cook County Jail Prison Conditions Amicus Brief (2016)
• "Guide for Attorneys Recruited to Represent Plaintiffs in Section 1983 Cases" (7th Circuit 2017)

Uptown People's Law Center guides:

• Grievance Procedure handout (April 2025)
• Filing a Federal Civil Rights Complaint (April 2025)
• Tips on Filing a Medical Care Lawsuit (March 2025)
• Overview of the Law: Excessive Force (May 2025)
• Know Your Rights: Out of Cell Time (May 2025)

Illinois Prison Project guides:

• Commutation Toolkit: (3/2023, 9pg)
• New Youth Parole Toolkit (2023)
• Commutation Petitions: A Guide for Incarcerated People and Their Loved Ones (Illinois Prison Project)
• Joe Coleman Medical Release Act (Illinois Prison Project)
• Sentencing Credit Handbook (Dec 2023)
• Pardon Handbook for Pro Se Filers (May 2024)
• Grievance Toolkit
• Youth Parole Toolkit
• Transfer Procedures
• Registry Reentry Guidelines

Illinois State Appellate Defender

• **Handbook on Briefs and Oral Arguments** (2020)
• **Monthly Criminal Law Digests** - notable rulings updated monthly
• **Criminal Law Handbook:** summaries of significant decisions, organized in chapters by topic.

CH 01 Accountability
CH 02 Appeal
CH 03 Armed Violence
CH 04 Arson
CH 05 Attempt
CH 06 Bail
CH 07 Battery, Assault, Stalking Offenses
CH 08 Burglary and Residential Burglary
CH 09 Collateral Remedies
CH 10 Confessions
CH 11 Conspiracy and Solicitation
CH 12 Contempt of Court
CH 13 Controlled Substances
Ch 14 Counsel Part A: (Right to Counsel, Waiver of Counsel , Attorney Fees and Costs , Effective Assistance of Counsel)
Ch 14 Counsel Part B: (Reasonable Assistance and Other Standards, Conflict of Interest, Where Lawyer's Competency is Challenged)
CH 15 Discovery
CH 16 Disorderly, Escape, Resisting & Obstructing Offenses
CH 17 Double Jeopardy
CH 18 Entrapment
Ch 19 EVIDENCE.
CH 20 Extradition
CH 21 Fitness To Stand Trial
CH 22 Forcible Felonies
CH 23 Forgery
CH 24 Guilty Pleas
CH 25 Home Invasion
CH 26 Homicide
CH 27 Identification
CH 28 Immunity
CH 29 Indictments, Information, Complaints
CH 30 Insanity - Mentally Ill - Intoxication
CH 31 Judge
Ch 32 JURY
Ch 32 JURY.
CH 33 Juvenile Proceedings
CH 34 Kidnapping, Unlawful Restraint & Related Offenses
CH 35 Obscenity
CH 36 Parole, Pardons and Prisoners' Rights
CH 37 Perjury
CH 38 Preliminary Hearing
CH 39 Probation, Periodic Imprisonment, Conditional Discharge and Supervision
CH 40 Prosecutor
CH 41 Reasonable Doubt
CH 42 Robbery
Ch 43 SEARCH AND SEIZURE
Ch44 SENTENCING
CH 45 Sex Offenses
CH 46 Speedy Trial
CH 47 Statutes
CH 48 Theft And Other Property Offenses
CH 49 Traffic Offenses
CH 50 Trial Joinder And Severance
CH 51 Trial Procedures
CH 52 Venue and Jurisdiction
CH 53 Verdicts
CH 54 Waiver - Plain Error - Harmless Error
CH 55 Weapons
CH 56 Witness

Publicaciónes en Español

• Guiâ para reclusos sobre la ley penitenciaria (2024)
• Construyendo Tu Futuro: Una guía para la reintegración exitosa" (2025, Illinois o Nacional)
• Un nuevo camino Una guía de los retos y oportunidades después de la deportación
• Lista Nacional De Recursos Para Prisioneros (3/23)
• Peticiones de Conmutación: Una guía para personas encarceladas en Illinois (Marzo de 2023)
• Cómo Preparar para la Audiencia de Clemencia de tu Ser Querido (IPP)
• Guía para Presentar una Solicitud de Asilo Defensivo para Personas LGBTQ y Personas Viviendo con VIH
• Conozca Sus Derechos "Pro Se": la detención, deportación, y defensas (NIJC June 2024)
• Los Derechos De Los Acusados En La Constitución
• Manual De Liberación Médica Joe Coleman (Illinois): Una Guía Para Personas Encarceladas, Sus Seres Queridos Y Abogados (IPP 1/24)
• Solicitudes de Perdón:Guía para Solicitantes Pro Se (Illinois IPP 11/24)
• Comprender los créditos por sentencia: Una guía (Illinois IPP)

Immigration

• Columbia Jailhouse Lawyer's Manual Immigration Supplement (11th Ed): Consequences of Criminal Activity and Right to Consular Access
• "A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges & Opportunities After Deportation " (available in english/español) (2025 Education Justice Project)
• Obtaining Release from Immigration Detention (2021 Catholic Legal Immigration Network)
• Trump Changes in Immigration Law (2025 NYBAR)
• Previous Tactics from the Fight Against ICE (2025 Lake Effect Collective)
• Asylum Defense for LGBTQ / People with HIV (Immigration Equality 9/23)
• All In One Guide to Defeating ICE Holds (NLG 2012)
• A Brief Guide to Representing Noncitizen Criminal Defendants in Illinois (NIJC June 2024)
• Know Your Rights: Pro Se guide Detention, Deportation and Defenses (NIJC Dec 2024)
• Procedural Manual For Asylum Representation and Removal Proceedings (NIJC 11/24)

Censorship

• "Lenient in Theory Dumb in Fact Prison Speech and Scrutiny (2016 David M. Shapiro)
• "Turner's Insurmountable Burden: A Three-Circuit Survey Of Prisoner Free Speech Claims" (2022, Kristen Schnell)
• "Midwest Prison Censorship Update 2025"
• "Circumventing Prison Tech Censorship" (2024)
• "End Book Bans and Mail Censorship at Cook County Jail!" (Midwest BTP 2023)
• Campaign Against Prison Censorship and Book Banning (2022 True Leap Press)
• "Don't Step Back, Fight Back! Proposal for a Coalition against Prison Censorship and Book Banning" by Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin
• "The Perils of Prison Tech Censorship" (2021 Final Straw Radio podcast)
• "Return to Sender: Prison As Censorship" (2023 Mariame Kaba)
• "RTS Zine" (2023 Project NIA)
• Jailhouse Lawyers Manual Ch 19: Your Right to Communicate with the Outside World

California

* CDCR Administrative Grievances and Appeals (2025 Prison Law Office)
* CA Lifer Parole Packet (2019 Legal Services for Prisoners with Children)
* CA State Court Petitions for Writ of Habeas Corpus (2019 Prison Law Office)
• Newsletter: "Keep The Fires Burning" (Oakland Abolition and Solidarity)
• Newsletter: "The Abolitionist" (Critical Resistance)

Request chapters from the 2024 "California Prison and Parole Law Handbook" by Prison Law Office:

Ch 1 Administrative Grievances And Appeals
Ch 2 Rights Of People In Prison
Ch 3 Cruel And Unusual Conditions Use Of Excessive Force And Protection From Physical Sexual Abuse
Ch 4 Classification, Housing, And Programs
Ch 5 Prison Rule Violations
Ch 6 Placement In Segregation
Ch 7 Medical Mental Health, And Dental Care
Ch 8 Determinate Sentences, Restitution Time Credits And Release Dates
Ch 9 Lifer Suitability Parole Pardon
Ch 10 Detainers And Extradition
Ch 11 Parole And Post-Release Community Supervision
Ch 12 Civil Commitment Sex Offense Mental Health
Ch 13 Immigration Issues For People In Prison
Ch 14 Direct Appeals Of Criminal Convictions
Ch 15 State Petitions For Writ Of Habeas Corpus And Writ Of Mandate
Ch 16 Federal Petitions For Writ Of Habeas Corpus
Ch 17 Federal Civil Rights 1983 Lawsuits
Ch 18 State Tort Lawsuits
Ch 18 State Tort Lawsuits
Ch 19 Legal Research Writing Strategies

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