

# ACLU Requests Documents Detailing Solitary Confinement in Colorado

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Contact: Rosemary Harris Lytle, Communications Director

303.777.5482, ext. 111 (office) 719.233.0243 (cell) [rharrislytle@aclu-co.org](mailto:rharrislytle@aclu-co.org)

The ACLU of Colorado filed a [Colorado Open Records Act](#) (CORA) request today, asking to inspect documents from the Department of Corrections which should provide dramatic details on the long-term isolation of those incarcerated in Colorado's state prisons.

The CORA request comes on the heels of the Senate Judiciary Committee's approval of a gutted version of [Senate Bill 176](#) which, in its original version, would have provided legislative changes to the warehousing of prisoners who are mentally ill into long-term solitary confinement.

The Judiciary Committee unanimously approved the amended SB 176 today, sending the skeletal bill on to the Senate Appropriations Committee. The amended bill does not address the effects of solitary confinement on mentally ill prisoners, nor does it call for mental health evaluations or a re-integration process before prisoners are released to the streets.

"We view the over-use of long-term solitary confinement in Colorado's prisons as cruel and unusual punishment – particularly for inmates who are mentally ill," said C. Ray Drew, ACLU of Colorado Executive Director. "It jeopardizes public safety, it's enormously expensive, it's patently inhumane and our goal is to see the over-use of long-term solitary confinement end in Colorado's prisons."

In addition to demanding a listing of every prisoner currently housed in solitary confinement, the CORA request – filed by ACLU lawyers -- asks for specific documents for every prisoner; documents that identify who has been flagged for "administrative segregation," better known as solitary confinement, and the reasons the DOC cited for doing so.

"The residents of Colorado, who potentially pay a price each time a mentally ill prisoner is released directly from solitary confinement to the streets, deserve to know as much as possible about this practice," Drew said. "With this information, we will have a clearer picture of who is placed in solitary confinement, why they are placed there and, ultimately, what it all means to the safety of our communities."

Ending solitary confinement in Colorado's prisons is part of a broad ACLU effort to curb mass incarceration in the state.

Approximately 37 percent of those in solitary confinement have been identified as mentally ill or developmentally disabled – a figure twice as high as it was just 10 years ago. The 1,400 inmate

in solitary confinement spend 23 hours a day in isolation, for 16 months on average, at a cost of \$49,485 per year, per inmate -- \$21,485 more than for inmates housed in general population, according to Department of Corrections figures.