



Media Advisory

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Solitary Confinement: Overused, Cruel and Ineffective

Featuring former Washington Corrections Secretary Eldon Vail

MISSOULA, MT — On any given day, more than 80,000 American prisoners are locked in isolation 23 hours a day without human contact and with little or no access to the outdoors.

Corrections officials argue that solitary confinement is necessary to maintain safety and order and that the practice modifies prisoner behavior. But experience shows solitary confinement causes anxiety, depression, paranoia and sometimes even hallucinations. These prisoners often complete their sentences in solitary and are released directly into society with little or no ability to cope with other people. Many end up back in prison.

The ACLU of Montana is working to end the overuse of solitary confinement in Montana prisons, especially on juveniles and prisoners with mental illnesses. On November, 15 we will host a program in Missoula to educate students and the general public about what solitary confinement entails, how it psychologically harms prisoners and how that hurts us as a society. Participants will hear from prisoners, corrections officials and psychiatrists in the 50-minute National Geographic documentary "Solitary Confinement."

They will then hear from Eldon Vail, former Secretary of the Washington State Department of Corrections, about how prisons can move more inmates out of solitary confinement and into the general population and about the special needs of mentally ill prisoners. Vail has 35 years of experience in corrections and has directly overseen three prisons. There will be the opportunity for questions.

- WHAT:** Workshop on solitary confinement – its negative effects on inmates and society and what can be done to reduce its use in prisons.
- WHO:** Former Washington Department of Corrections Secretary Eldon Vail, who has more than 30 years of experience in corrections, including overseeing three prisons.
- WHEN:** Thursday, November 15, 2012
7-9 p.m.
- WHERE:** School of Law, Room 201
University of Montana
Missoula, Montana

Eldon Vail is available for interviews by phone prior to Thursday, November 15, and in person at the event.

Free and open to the public. Approved by the Montana Bar Association for 2 Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits. More information at www.aclumontana.org