

2020 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 64

BY REPRESENTATIVE JAMES

CRIMINAL/SENTENCING: Requests the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to study the use of solitary confinement in Louisiana

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To urge and request the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to gather data on the  
3 use of solitary confinement in Louisiana, to collect personal statements from at least  
4 two hundred current inmates on their experiences in solitary confinement, and to  
5 report its findings to the House of Representatives of the Louisiana Legislature by  
6 May 2021.

7 WHEREAS, according to a recent report by Solitary Watch, the American Civil  
8 Liberties Union of Louisiana, and the Jesuit Social Research Institute across the United  
9 States, eighty thousand to one hundred thousand incarcerated people are locked in prison or  
10 jail cells without any meaningful human interaction for twenty-two to twenty-four hours a  
11 day for weeks, years, and even decades straight; and

12 WHEREAS, according to the same report, prolonged social isolation can inflict  
13 permanent psychological and neurological damage and, because of the severe physical and  
14 mental damage that extreme isolation can cause, the United Nations has warned that the use  
15 of solitary confinement beyond fifteen days can be tantamount to torture and should be  
16 banned; and

17 WHEREAS, in 2016, the VERA Institute for Justice found that over seventeen  
18 percent of people in Louisiana prisons were in solitary confinement, which is almost four  
19 times the national average; and

20 WHEREAS, the report by Solitary Watch, the American Civil Liberties Union of  
21 Louisiana, and the Jesuit Social Research Institute, which is based on a survey of over seven

1 hundred inmates currently in solitary confinement, raises many questions about the use of  
2 solitary confinement in Louisiana prisons and the need for a comprehensive study of solitary  
3 confinement is clear.

4       THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the  
5 Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Public Safety and  
6 Corrections to gather basic data on the use of solitary confinement in Louisiana, including  
7 but not limited to demographic data on persons who are in solitary confinement, the duration  
8 of each person's solitary confinement, and the reasons for placement in solitary confinement.  
9 The demographic data gathered by the department shall include but is not limited to  
10 information on the person's race, sex, and age, the offense for which the person was  
11 convicted, the length of the person's sentence, the number of years the person has been  
12 incarcerated, and the number of years remaining on the person's sentence. The department  
13 shall also collect personal statements from at least two hundred current inmates on their  
14 experiences in solitary confinement.

15       BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Public Safety and Corrections  
16 shall issue a report of its findings to the House of Representatives of the Louisiana  
17 Legislature by May 2021.

18       BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be provided  
19 to the secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections.

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DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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HR 64 Original

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Requests the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections to gather basic data on the use of solitary confinement in La., including but not limited to demographic data on persons who are in solitary confinement, the duration of each person's solitary confinement, and the reasons for placement in solitary confinement. The department shall also collect personal statements from at least 200 current inmates on their experiences in solitary confinement. Requires the department to issue a report of its findings by May 2021.