

2020 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 64

BY REPRESENTATIVE JAMES

A RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the report by Solitary Watch, the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, and the Jesuit Social Research Institute, which is based on a survey of over seven hundred inmates currently in solitary confinement, raises many questions about the use of solitary confinement in Louisiana prisons and the need for a comprehensive study of solitary confinement is clear.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to gather basic data on the use of solitary confinement in Louisiana, 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 demographic data gathered by the department shall include but is not limited to information on the person's race, sex, and age, the offense for which the person was convicted, the length of the person's sentence, the number of years the person has been incarcerated, and the number of years remaining on the person's sentence. The department shall also collect personal statements from at least two hundred current inmates on their experiences in solitary confinement.

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

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

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES