

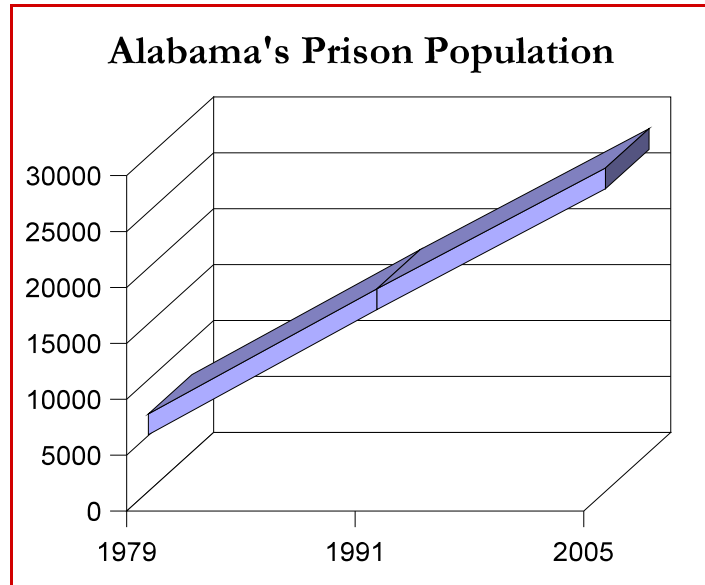
# ALABAMA PRISON CONDITIONS

Alabama's prisons were built to hold 14,000 prisoners. Today, they hold 28,000.

Alabama faces an overcrowding crisis created by the tremendous increase in the number of people sent to prison over the last 25 years. Alabama spends only \$26 per day to incarcerate a prisoner. The national average is more than twice as much, at \$62 per inmate. Alabama's per-inmate spending ranks last among 16 states in the Southeast, where the average daily cost is \$40 per inmate.

Alabama's prisons have the highest ratio of inmates to corrections officers in the country. Many have waiting lists for solitary confinement. Unsafe prison conditions have given rise to lawsuits in which courts have found that crowding in some state and local facilities is "barbaric" and poses "a substantial risk to staff and inmates." Alabama inmates have been forced to sleep on concrete floors in facilities where the "sardine-can appearance of [the] cell units more nearly resemble the holding units of slave ships during the

Middle Passage of the eighteenth century than anything in the twenty-first century."



The costs associated with maintaining Alabama's disproportionately large prison population seriously threaten the state's fiscal health. Estimates project that it may cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars over the next ten years to maintain current levels of incarceration.

Built to house 360 inmates, Tutwiler Prison for Women held over 1000 in 2003. In response to a federal court order, the Department of Corrections (DOC) sent 309 Tutwiler inmates to the South Louisiana Correctional Center, a private prison located in Basile, Louisiana, and operated by LCS Corrections Services, Inc. The LCS facility's recent history includes a riot, escape, grand jury indictment of a high-ranking executive on charges of violating inmates' civil rights, and charges that guards sexually abused prisoners. Alabama's emergency contract with LCS to house prisoners from Tutwiler and 1400 male prisoners cost \$500,000.

*"[O]ur prison system is a ticking time bomb – especially considering that it is operating at more than 200 percent capacity."*

**– Governor Riley**

Alabama ranks last in the country in spending on medical care per inmate. Alabama spends approximately \$5.50 per inmate. The national average is \$7.38 per inmate. Alabama prisoners die at a higher rate than in most other states.

The treatment provided to Alabama prisoners with HIV/AIDS is illustrative of the state prison health care system. Class-action litigation filed in 2002 revealed that

Alabama prisoners with HIV/AIDS were denied doctor visits for up to eight months at a time and housed in a vermin-infested “old warehouse with leaky ceilings and double bunks so close together that they foster infections.” Inmates too weak to stand in long lines for medication were forced to go without. Alabama’s Tutwiler Prison for Women is the only prison in the country that segregates HIV-positive inmates.

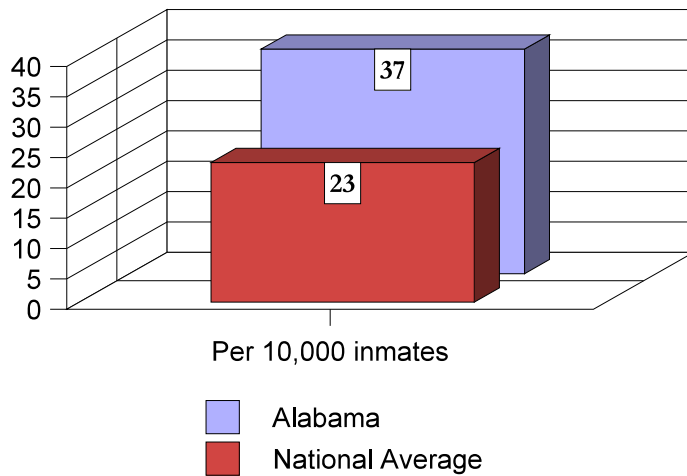
Alabama’s prison population is aging beyond the state’s capacity to adequately care for elderly prisoners. As of July 2004, 591 Alabama prisoners were at least fifty years old. Over 1300 Alabama prisoners are serving sentences of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Elderly prisoners require more medical attention: the national

average cost of incarcerating a prisoner increases threefold to \$69,000 per year once that prisoner reaches an advanced age. Elderly prisoners are more vulnerable to depression and exploitation and should be supervised by correctional staff specially trained to manage their unique physical, mental and dietary needs. Alabama sends minimum and medium security elderly and ill prisoners to Hamilton Aged and Infirm Center, where prisoners suffer inhumane and

improper treatment.

The DOC earns more than a half million dollars per month – \$6.5 million per year – from inmate telephone calls. A private telephone service provider pays the DOC a 56% commission and passes on the cost to the friends and families of inmates who pay high rates to receive collect calls from Alabama prisoners. Recipients of inmate calls are charged for calls that are not connected, for long delays between the time that the call is accepted and the time at which the recipient and inmate can actually talk to each other, and for more time than is actually used. Calls frequently are cut off, so another connection fee must be paid to resume the conversation. One Alabama recipient reported that 43 disconnects occurred on her phone in under 7 minutes, costing her over \$100.

## 2003 Prisoner Death Rate



**Alabama prisoners die at a rate of 37 deaths per 10,000 prisoners, in contrast with the national average of 23 deaths per 10,000. Among Alabama prisoners with HIV, the death rate is one of the highest in the country.**