

for leading this effort. We are always looking for good news in our war on violent crime and the threat that it poses to our families. This morning I want to share some good news. This good news is based on hard facts presented in a major study done by the National Center for Policy Analysis, which is located in my State. I think that when you listen to the numbers, they speak as loudly and as clearly as a clap of thunder.

Five years ago, Texans finally had enough of violent crime, so we launched the largest prison building program in the history of the United States of America. Over a 4-year period, we expanded the size of the Texas prison system from a 49,000 criminal capacity to a 150,000 criminal capacity.

In terms of our population, Texas started out having a per capita violent criminal incarceration rate that was roughly equal to the national average. Four years later, we have the highest criminal incarceration rate of any State in the Union. I believe that this is a direct result of building new prisons, putting people in jail, and beginning to approach what we call "truth in sentencing," so that when somebody is sentenced to prison for 10 years, they actually, honest to God, serve 10 years in prison.

We have seen the following things happen in Texas in terms of expected punishment for committing major crimes. Over the 6-year period between 1988 and 1994, the expected punishment in Texas for murder rose by 360 percent. For rape, the expected punishment rose by 266 percent; for larceny, 167 percent; for aggravated assault, the expected punishment rose by 360 percent. For burglary, the expected punishment rose by 299 percent; for robbery, 220 percent; and for motor vehicle theft, 222 percent.

In other words, we built prisons, we got tough, we sent people to prisons, and we extended the amount of time criminals actually spend in prison. What happened? Well, what happened is that the overall crime rate in Texas has fallen by 30-percent since 1988. Let me repeat that. We increased the number of prison beds. We more than doubled the expected punishment for crimes ranging from murder to car theft, we increased the number of people in prison, and the crime rate fell by 30 percent.

Let me put that in more meaningful terms: As compared to 5 years ago when we started building prisons and putting violent criminals in prison in Texas—as compared to 1991—the 30-percent lower crime rate we have today means that in this year alone, 1,140 people in Texas who, at the crime rate of 5 years ago would have been murdered in my State, will not be murdered. It means that in 1996, 450,000 less serious crimes will be committed than would have been committed had we not tripled the capacity of our prisons.

The lesson is very clear. We have a small number of violent predator

criminals who commit a huge percentage of our violent crimes. When you are willing to put them in jail and keep them there, the crime rate falls.

The time has come for us to get serious at the Federal level. We have three major statutes that criminalize prison labor. We are one of the few countries in the world which cannot make people in prison work to produce something that can be sold in order to help pay for the cost of incarceration. Three depression-years laws make it a crime to require prisoners work, make it a crime to sell what they produce, and make it a crime to transport what is produced. In other words, we can require taxpayers to work in order to pay for building and maintaining prisons, but we cannot make prisoners work in order to do the same. We should repeal those three statutes. We should turn our Federal prisons into industrial parks. We should cut the cost of prison construction by stopping the building of prisons like Holiday Inns. We need to put people in jail for violent crimes. We need to have sentences of 10 years in prison without parole for possessing a firearm during the commission of a violent crime or drug felony, 20 years for discharging it, and the death penalty for killing one of our neighbors.

If we do those things, we can end this wave of violence. We are allowing our fellow citizens to be brutalized by violent criminals because we will not do something about it. In Texas, we have shown that you can do something about it and I would like us to follow that lead at the Federal level. I commend the National Center for Policy Analysis for conducting this study which was released in January of this year. Every Member of Congress should read this study and I would be happy to supply it to anyone who is interested in doing so.

Mr. President, I thank you for listening.

Let me now yield 10 minutes to the Senator from Michigan [Mr. ABRAHAM].

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Michigan.

Mr. ABRAHAM. I thank the Chair.

CONTROL OF PRISONS

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I should like to pick up on some of the topics which the Senator from Texas was discussing and particularly focus on one aspect of the Republican agenda on crime, prison reform. I would like today to discuss the proposals we Senate Republicans have developed under the leadership of the majority leader, Senator DOLE, to end frivolous lawsuits brought by prisoners, to remove our prisons from the control of Federal judges, and return control over them to our State and local officials.

Mr. President, let me begin by outlining the problem. In 1995, 65,000 prisoner lawsuits were filed in Federal courts alone. To put that in context, 65,000 lawsuits is more than the total

number of Federal prosecutions initiated in 1995. In other words, prisoners incarcerated in various prisons brought more cases in the Federal courts than all Federal prosecutions last year combined.

The vast majority of these lawsuits are nonmeritorious. The National Association of Attorneys General estimated that 95 percent of them are dismissed without the inmate receiving anything.

Let me just list a few examples.

First, an inmate claimed \$1 million in damages for civil rights violations because his ice cream had melted. The judge ruled that the right to eat ice cream was clearly not within the contemplation of our Nation's forefathers.

Second, an inmate alleged that being forced to listen to his unit manager's country and western music constituted cruel and unusual punishment.

Third, an inmate sued because when his dinner tray arrived, the piece of cake on it was "hacked up."

Fourth, an inmate sued because he was served chunky instead of smooth peanut butter.

Fifth, two prisoners sued to force taxpayers to pay for sex change surgery while they were in prison.

On and on the list goes, Mr. President, with more and more ridiculous lawsuits brought by inmates in penitentiaries. A prisoner who sued demanding LA Gear or Reebok "Pumps" instead of Converse tennis shoes.

These kinds of lawsuits are an enormous drain on the resources of our States and localities, resources that would be better spent incarcerating more dangerous offenders instead of being consumed in court battles without merit.

Thirty-three States have estimated that they spend at least \$54.5 million annually combined on these lawsuits. The National Association of Attorneys General has extrapolated that number to conclude that the annual costs for all of these States are approximately \$81 million a year to battle cases of the sort that I have just described.

In addition to the problems created by the lawsuits the courts have dismissed, we have what is, if anything, a more serious problem—lawsuits the courts have not dismissed that have resulted in turning over the running of our prisons to the courts.

In many jurisdictions, including my own State of Michigan, judicial orders entered under Federal law have effectively turned control of the prison system away from elected officials accountable to the taxpayers and over to the courts. The courts, in turn, raise the costs of running prisons far beyond what is necessary and undermine the very legitimacy and deterrent effect of prison sentences. Judicial orders entered under Federal law have even resulted in the release of dangerous criminals from prison. Thus, right now, our existing Federal laws are actually wasting the taxpayers' money and creating risk to public safety.

Let me explain a little bit about how this works. Under a series of judicial decrees resulting from Justice Department lawsuits against the Michigan Department of Corrections back in the 1960's, the Federal courts now monitor our State prisons to determine: first, how warm the food is; second, how bright the lights are; third, whether there are electrical outlets in each cell; fourth, whether windows are inspected and up to code; fifth, whether a prisoner's hair is cut only by licensed barbers; and sixth, whether air and water temperatures in the prison are comfortable.

Complying with these court orders, litigating over what they mean, and producing the reports necessary to keep the courts happy has cost the Michigan taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars since 1984.

This would be bad enough if a court had ever found that Michigan's prison system was at some point in violation of the Constitution or if the conditions there had been declared inhumane, but that is not the case. To the contrary, nearly all of Michigan's facilities are fully accredited by the American Corrections Association.

We have what may be the most extensive training program in the Nation for corrections officers. Our rate of prison violence is among the lowest of any State. And we have spent an average of \$4,000 a year per prisoner for health care, including nearly \$1,700 for mental health services.

Rather, the judicial intervention is the result of a consent decree that Michigan entered into in 1982, 13 years ago, that was supposed to end a lawsuit filed at the same time. Instead, the decree has been a source of continuous litigation and intervention by the court into the minutia of prison operations.

The Michigan story is a bad one, Mr. President, but let me tell you a story that causes me even more concern, and that is on the public safety side, the example that is going on even today in the city of Philadelphia. There a Federal judge has been overseeing what has become a program of wholesale releases of up to 600 criminal defendants per week to keep the prison population down to what the judge considers an appropriate level.

As a result, a large number of defendants have been released back onto the streets. Following their release, thousands of these defendants have been re-arrested for new crimes every year including 79 murders, 90 rapes, 959 robberies, 2,215 drug dealing charges, 701 burglaries, 2,748 thefts, and 1,113 assaults.

Under this order, there are no individualized bail hearings based on a defendant's criminal history before deciding whether to release the defendant pretrial. Instead, the only consideration is what the defendant is charged with the day of his or her arrest.

No matter what the defendant has done before, even, for example, if he or she was previously convicted of murder, if the charge giving rise to the spe-

cific arrest on the specific date is a nonviolent crime, the defendant may not be held pretrial.

Moreover, the so-called nonviolent crimes include stalking, carjacking, robbery with a baseball bat, burglary, drug dealing, vehicular homicide, manslaughter, terroristic threats, and gun charges. Those are charged as non-violent and consequently those arrested are not detained.

Failure to appear rates, needless to say, for crimes covered by the cap are up around 70 percent as opposed to non-covered crimes for aggravated assault where the rate is just 3 percent.

The Philadelphia fugitive rate for defendants charged with drug dealing is 76 percent, three times the national average. Over 100 persons in Philadelphia have been killed by criminals set free under this prison cap.

Mr. President, I think this is all wrong. People deserve to keep their tax dollars or to have them spent on progress they approve. They deserve better than to have their money spent on keeping prisoners and prisons in conditions a particular Federal judge feels are desirable but not required by the Constitution or any law.

They certainly do not need it spent on endless litigation over these matters.

Meanwhile, criminals, while they must be accorded their constitutional rights, deserve to be punished. Obviously, they should not be tortured or treated cruelly. At the same time, they also should not have all the rights and privileges the rest of us enjoy. Rather, their lives should, on the whole, be describable by the old concept known as "hard time." By interfering with the fulfillment of this punitive function, the courts are effectively seriously undermining the entire criminal justice system.

Our distinguished majority leader, Senator DOLE, working with Senator HATCH, Senator KYL, Senator HUTCHISON, and myself, has developed legislation to address these problems. Our proposals will return sanity and State control to our prison systems.

To begin with, we would institute several measures to reduce frivolous inmate litigation. We would require judicial screening, before docketing, of any civil complaint filed by a prisoner seeking relief from the Government.

This provision would allow a Federal judge to immediately dismiss a complaint if either the complaint does not state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or the defendant is immune from suit. In addition, State prisoners would have to exhaust all administrative remedies before filing a lawsuit in Federal court.

We would also create disincentives for prisoners to file frivolous suits. Under current law, there is no cost to prisoners for filing an infinite number of such suits. First, we would require inmates who file lawsuits to pay the full amount of their court fees and other costs. We also would make that requirement enforceable by allowing their trust accounts to be garnished to

pay these fees. If a prisoner is unable to fully pay court fees and other costs at the time of filing a lawsuit, 20 percent of the funds in his trust account would be garnished for this purpose. Every month thereafter 20 percent of the income credited to the prisoner's account would be garnished until the full amount is paid off.

We would also allow Federal courts to revoke any good-time credits accumulated by a prisoner who files a frivolous suit. Finally, we would prohibit prisoners who have filed three frivolous or obviously nonmeritorious in forma pauperis civil actions from filing any more unless they are in imminent danger of severe bodily harm, and we would cap and limit the attorney's fees that can be obtained from the defendant in such suits.

As to the powers of judges to overrule our legislatures, we would forbid courts from entering orders for prospective relief—such as regulating food temperatures—unless the order is necessary to correct violations of individual plaintiffs' Federal rights. We also would require that the relief be narrowly drawn and be the least intrusive means of protecting the Federal rights. We would direct courts to give substantial weight to any adverse impact on public safety or the operation of the criminal justice system caused by the relief. And we would impose important new requirements before a court can enter an order that requires the release of prisoners, including that such orders may be entered in the Federal system only by a three-judge court.

We also would provide that any party can seek to have a court decree ended after 2 years, and that the court will order it ended unless there is still a constitutional violation that needs to be corrected. As a result, no longer will prison administration be turned over to Federal judges for the indefinite future for the slightest reason. No longer will public safety be jeopardized by capricious judicial prison caps. And no longer will the taxpayers be socked for enormous, unnecessary bills to pay for all this.

Instead, the States will be able to run prisons as they see fit unless there is a constitutional violation. If there is, a narrowly tailored order to correct the violation may be entered.

This is a balanced set of proposals, allowing the courts to step in where they are needed, but puts an end to unnecessary judicial intervention and micromanagement of our prison system we see too often.

These proposals were included as part of the Commerce, State, Justice appropriation bill. Unfortunately, President Clinton vetoed this legislation. As a result, we continue to have more frivolous prisoner lawsuits and we continue to have some courts running prisons.

President Clinton said his veto was based on other parts of the legislation.

Accordingly, we will shortly be sending him a new version of an omnibus appropriations bill that again includes these proposals. This is one measure we can take that will plainly advance our fight against crime. We hope this time, President Clinton will help.

Mr. President, at this time, I yield the floor to the Senator from Tennessee for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Tennessee.

TOUGH RHETORIC ABOUT CRIME

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, we are listening to a lot of rhetoric about crime and being tough on crime. But no matter how many cops we put on the street, no matter how many laws we pass, unless we have strong law enforcement efforts at the very top of the Justice Department and the very top of the executive branch of this Government, we are going to be letting out the back door whatever we are putting in our prison system in the front door.

In fact, the policies of an administration are much more important than any other component of our law enforcement system. An administration's decisions as to who to prosecute, how effectively to prosecute, what cases to appeal, and what positions to take, affect thousands and thousands of cases. They affect not only the specific cases that are brought but maybe even can determine what cases are brought in the future.

In other words, an administration needs to be strong in its law enforcement position. It needs to advocate the legitimate interests of the Federal Government, when Federal criminal statutes are involved. The President has engaged in strong law enforcement rhetoric. The President states that he is for the death penalty. But it is my unfortunate duty to report that the rhetoric does not match the action.

I am specifically referring to the actions of the Solicitor General. The Solicitor General in this country is the Government's lawyer. The Solicitor General advocates the Government's position before the Supreme Court of the United States. The Solicitor General is appointed by the President of the United States and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Time after time, the position taken by the Solicitor General has been inconsistent with the rhetoric coming out of the White House.

The Solicitor General, in case after case, has refused to appeal cases in which lower courts have overruled the Government, have overturned the defendant's convictions or have made it practically impossible that the defendant be prosecuted. Instead of appealing that case, even when in some decisions there are strong dissents saying, "No, no, no, the Government is right here and the defendant is wrong," in case after case, the Solicitor General has taken the position of the defendant, essentially, and not appealed that case to

at least give a higher court an opportunity to hold for the Government.

When the Solicitor General makes a decision whether to appeal an adverse ruling, he is not in the position of a judge making an objective determination. The Solicitor General is supposed to be an advocate for us, an advocate for the people trying to enforce the law in this country. If there is a legitimate position to take in an important case—and these dissents, if nothing else, would indicate there would be in those cases—the Solicitor General is supposed to take that position and give the courts an opportunity to hold with the Government and against the defendant in those cases.

We will have more to say about that later on next week with regard to some specific cases. But there is one particular point that is very relevant. It has to do with the recent bombing case that we all know about. It has to do with the so-called Cheely decision. There, a panel of the court, not even the full court, ruled that death penalties provided in two Federal statutes, essentially statutes prohibiting sending bombs through the mails, were unconstitutional. That is the ninth circuit decision; by a lower court. It was a panel of the full court that made that decision. The Solicitor General chose not to appeal to let the full court of the ninth circuit even have an opportunity to overrule the panel.

So, as far as it stands out there, the death penalties contained in the mail bomb statutes are unconstitutional as far as that circuit is concerned. Obviously, that has some great relevance to what we are seeing now. We are all pleased that a suspect has been taken into custody with regard to the Unabomber case. Whether or not this man is charged with any of the three killings, or the terrorizing of many other people through a series of mail bombs, a jury hearing the Unabomber case should have the option of imposing the death penalty. But I fear that if he is charged in the Unabomber killings, the Justice Department may well have made it so that it is impossible for the jury or the court out there to impose the death penalty.

The problem is that the most recent Unabomber killing occurred in California. California is in the ninth circuit. The ninth circuit decided the case I referred to a minute ago in 1994, called Cheely versus United States. Cheely had been convicted of murder. He and his coconspirators arranged for a mail bomb to be sent to the post office box of a key witness against them in a trial. The witness' father was killed when he opened the packaged bomb.

Obviously, the facts are similar to the Unabomber case. Cheely was charged with interstate transport of an explosive that resulted in death and for death resulting from mailing non-mailable items. The Bush administration, which was in office at the time, asked for the death penalty. The ninth

circuit panel ruled, however, that the death penalty statutes for mail bombings were unconstitutional.

The ninth circuit held that the class of persons eligible for the death penalty under these statutes was constitutionally broad. Now mind you, a Carter-appointed judge on that same panel dissented from that decision.

Given that President Clinton publicly supports the death penalty, it would seem reasonable to expect that the Justice Department would automatically have sought to appeal that sort of decision which struck down a Federal statute allowing the death penalty, with a strong dissent included. But the Solicitor General did not file a petition for rehearing by the full court.

In an extraordinary move, however, the full ninth circuit ordered the parties to address whether an en banc hearing should be granted. Surprisingly, the Justice Department argued that the ninth circuit should not grant review in this case.

Mr. President, the Justice Department wound up arguing against itself. Not so surprisingly, the ninth circuit then failed to grant rehearing. The Clinton Justice Department did not file an appeal with the Supreme Court.

The Judiciary Committee held an oversight hearing this past November. At that hearing, I asked Solicitor General Days why he did not file a rehearing petition in Cheely and in another case in another circuit. He indicated that although there was an argument to be raised on the other side, he did not think that the cases raised large enough concerns to justify asking for a rehearing. Of course, the constitutionality of many death sentences obtained on the basis of pre-1976 Federal statutes was at issue. He also indicated that he had discussed the case with Attorney General Reno.

The effects of this are obvious, because if this man is charged under the Federal mail bomb statutes for the Unabomber killing in California, he cannot be given the death penalty. Had the Sacramento Federal building, and not the Oklahoma City Federal building, been bombed, the death penalty might not be available to be sought against Timothy McVeigh in Federal court.

According to the Saturday Washington Post, Justice Department officials say they are "pondering whether to bring charges against Kocynski," in the Unabomber case, "initially in Sacramento, the site of the last bombing in April 1995, or in New Jersey," where a 1994 killing occurred. I have a good idea why they are pondering. Any other time, the prosecutor might bring charges where the most recent case occurred, and where the evidence is fresher. And, in fact, the Unabomber sent more bombs to California than anywhere else.

But the case maybe cannot be brought there if the administration desires to seek the death penalty. I do not know if the New Jersey case is as strong as the California case. The third