

S. RES. 154

At the request of Mrs. ERNST, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 154, a resolution promoting awareness of motorcycle profiling and encouraging collaboration and communication with the motorcycle community and law enforcement officials to prevent instances of profiling.

S. RES. 214

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 214, a resolution designating June 19, 2017, as “Juneteenth Independence Day” in recognition of June 19, 1865, the date on which slavery legally came to an end in the United States.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Ms. WARREN, Mr. DURBIN, and Ms. HARRIS):

S. 1524. A bill to improve the treatment of Federal prisoners who are primary caretaker parents, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I rise to introduce the Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act (Dignity Act), a critical criminal justice reform bill that would provide much needed reforms to address the unique needs women face in Federal prisons. This legislation helps shed light on the unique challenges women face behind bars, which seldom receive the attention they deserve in our criminal justice reform efforts. It is time we begin to remedy the barriers incarcerated women face, and that’s what this bill would do. I thank Senators WARREN, DURBIN, and HARRIS for cosponsoring this bill, and I am proud to have their support.

America is truly exceptional when it comes to incarceration. The United States has 5 percent of the world’s population and 25 percent of the globe’s prison population. Since 1980, our Federal population has grown by nearly 80 percent.

But let’s look specifically at incarcerated women. Only 5 percent of the world’s female population live in the United States, but nearly 30 percent of the world’s incarcerated women are in our Nation—twice the percentage of China and four times as much as Russia. Since 1978, the number of women incarcerated in State and Federal prisons in the United States has increased by 716 percent, twice the growth rate of men. America currently has 110,000 women behind bars, and women account for a larger proportion of the prison population than ever before in our Nation’s history.

The numbers of women in our Federal prisons has seen substantial growth. Although women represent a small percentage of Federal prisoners, the proportion of women in the Federal system rose from 12.1 percent in fiscal

year 2009 to 13.3 percent in fiscal year 2013. Based on the most recent Sentencing Commission data, 9,400 women were in Federal prisons as of fiscal year 2013. In 2013, more than two-thirds of women in Federal prison were behind bars due to nonviolent drug, fraud, or immigration crimes and over 70 percent of women in Federal prisons had little or no prior criminal history.

An urgent need exists to address the unique challenges women face while behind bars. Women are often primary caretaker parents, meaning their incarceration impacts children. Incarcerated women face the unconscionable choice of either calling home to talk to their children or using commissary funds to buy sanitary napkins. Women in prison are frequently victims of trauma. According to data from Vera Institute of Justice, women in jails face high-levels of trauma: 86 percent experienced sexual violence, 77 percent report partner violence, and 60 percent were survivors of caregiver violence. These troubling statistics deserve our attention.

Today, I’m proud to introduce the Dignity Act, a comprehensive bill that would begin to remedy the unique challenges faced by women behind bars. The bill would require the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to consider the location of children when placing an incarcerated parent in a Federal prison, which helps alleviate the great distances children and other loved ones often have to travel to visit incarcerated parents.

The bill would mandate the BOP create more generous and uniform visitation hours for primary caretaker parents to provide more easy access to loved ones while a woman is behind bars. We know family visitation is a critical part of a successful reentry strategy, so this commonsense provision would help maintain family contact when parents are behind bars. As a result, this provision makes it less likely that returning citizens commit crimes, which would enhance public safety.

The Dignity Act would ban solitary confinement and shackling of pregnant women in Federal prison. Studies confirm serious psychological and physical harm are likely to occur when these harsh practices are used on pregnant women. It is time we ban the use of solitary and shackling on pregnant women and treat these women with the dignity and respect they deserve.

The bill would also require the BOP to provide parenting classes to primary caretaker parents, provide trauma-informed care to victims of trauma, and allow returning citizens to mentor incarcerated people. It would mandate the BOP train correctional officers in how to identify trauma victims in prison. This bill would help ensure people behind bars receive the critical programming they need to prepare for reentry into society.

The Dignity Act contains numerous other reforms. It would create an om-

budsman at the Department of Justice to look into abuses associated with solitary confinement, prisoner transportation, strip searches, and other civil rights abuses. The bill would require the BOP to eliminate prison phone rates and mandate all prisons be equipped with video conferencing, which the bill ensures would be made available free of charge to incarcerated people. The legislation would require the BOP to make certain health products available for free, such as sanitary napkins, toothpaste, and ibuprofen.

Other reforms in the bill would preclude correctional officers of the opposite gender of the incarcerated individual from conducting strip searches or entering a restroom of the opposite gender. The bill has a common-sense exception for when an incarcerated woman’s health is in danger and for other exigent circumstances. The bill would require the BOP to allow primary caretaker parents access to the Residential Drug Abuse Program, a critical drug treatment program, even if they fail to admit to having a substance abuse disorder prior to their incarceration. Finally, the Dignity Act would require the BOP to create a pilot program for overnight visits for incarcerated parents and children.

The legislation has broad support from organizations like the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, the ACLU, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

The Dignity Act would provide critical reforms to address challenges women behind bars face. Again, I thank Senators WARREN, DURBIN, and HARRIS for their leadership. I am proud to introduce this important criminal justice reform bill, and I urge my colleagues to support its speedy passage.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 217—WELCOMING PRIME MINISTER YOUSSEF CHAHED OF THE TUNISIAN REPUBLIC ON HIS FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES, CONGRATULATING THE PEOPLE OF THE TUNISIAN REPUBLIC ON THEIR EMBRACE OF DEMOCRACY AFTER DECADES OF DICTATORSHIP, AND ENCOURAGING FUTURE REFORMS

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. COONS, Mr. Kaine, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. COTTON, and Mr. MCCAIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 217

Whereas, on December 17, 2010, Mohammad Bouazizi, a young fruit vendor in Sidi Bouzid, set himself on fire to protest his unjust treatment by the regime of Tunisian