

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 11, 2007

Confronting Confinement: Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons

Dear Colleague:

On any given day, 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the United States. Over the course of a year, millions more spend time in a jail or prison, including the 750,000 men and woman who work in correctional facilities. Over \$60 billion are spent each year on America's corrections system. Of the 95% of State prisoners who are eventually released, 67% are rearrested and 52% are re-incarcerated within three years.

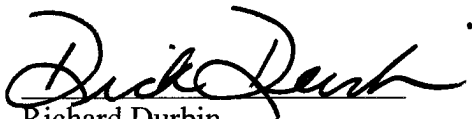
One year ago, five members of the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons testified before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Corrections and Rehabilitation about the Commission's report, *Confronting Confinement*. The report is the result of an inquiry that featured four public hearings across the country, testimony from over 100 witnesses, visits to jails and prisons, conversations with inmates and corrections professionals, and a comprehensive review of available research and data.

The Commission, co-chaired by John J. Gibbons, former Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, and former U.S. Attorney General Nicholas de B. Katzenbach, concluded that serious problems exist in prisons and jails that threaten the health and safety of inmates, corrections officers, and the community at large. *Confronting Confinement* focused on four areas: the dangerous conditions of confinement that result from violence, poor healthcare, and the inappropriate use of segregation; the challenges facing labor and management; weak oversight of correctional facilities; and serious flaws in the available data about what happens inside prisons and jails.

The report also identified many innovative and promising practices being implemented across the country. *Confronting Confinement* offers 30 pragmatic recommendations for reform at the federal, state, and facility levels – measures that the Commission concludes would go a long way towards turning correctional facilities into places that truly “correct” and redirect those incarcerated within them.

A year after our initial hearing last June, the information and recommendations of the Commission are no less relevant than at their release. We are pleased to share a copy of *Confronting Confinement* with you, and urge you to review and consider its findings and their implications for our current policy discussions in the United States Senate. Should you have any questions about the work of the Commission or its findings, please contact the Commission's Executive Director, Alex Busansky, at (202) 347-5193.

Sincerely,



Richard Durbin
United States Senator



Tom Coburn, M.D.
United States Senator