

LOUISIANA

Letter to feds says Angola conditions are cruel

Richmond among four who signed

By Lauren McGaughy
Staff writer

Conditions at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola and other state prisons should be investigated by the U.S. Justice Department's civil rights division, four congressmen said Friday. U.S. Rep. Cedric Richmond, D-New Orleans, signed a letter to Justice calling into question Louisiana prison's practices of solitary confinement, strip searches and treatment of Death Row inmates.

"We have reason to believe that the Louisiana Department of Corrections has engaged in a pattern or practice of violations of the United States Constitution in its use of such confinement and detention practices," said the letter to Thomas Perez, assistant attorney general for civil rights. Joining Richmond on the letter were Reps. John Conyers, D-Mich., Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y. and Bobby Scott, D-Va.

It comes in the wake of two lawsuits filed by Angola inmates against the corrections department in the past several months. The congressmen said they have evidence that Louisiana prison officials held prisoners in solitary confinement for unprecedented lengths and "colluded" with members of the state attorney general's office to cherry-pick evidence from inmate phone calls to justify longer confinement sentences.

The letter specifically mentions Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox, two members of the Angola Three, who were



Cedric Richmond
Joined four congressmen in signing letter to the feds

original crime after 29 years in solitary.

Wallace, 72, who was recently diagnosed with liver cancer, did not receive medical attention until he lost 50 pounds and was sent to the emergency room for treatment, according to the congressmen. The letter alleged that other inmates "who have received less attention from the press" have likely spent as long in solitary as Wallace and Woodfox.

In addition, the letter says inmates are subjected to daily strip searches without cause. It cited a recent court case in which three Death Row inmates allege that extreme heat conditions expose them to illness and death.

The letter does not mention a second lawsuit brought by two other Death Row inmates who urge prison officials to release the state's execution protocol. The protocol was released last month, but the plaintiffs' lawyers said the included information was insufficient.

In addition to mentioning Angola, the maximum-security prison about 60 miles northwest of Baton Rouge, the letter questions conditions at David Wade Correctional Center in Homer and Elayn Hunt Correctional Center in St. Gabriel.

"We do not allege these

convicted of the stabbing death of a prison guard in 1972. Wallace and Woodfox have remained in solitary confinement since then, while the third member of the group, Robert King, was exonerated of his

apparently unconstitutional patterns and practices lightly," the letter read, adding the congressmen have spent six years discussing these and other issues with officials, inmates and stakeholders.

In response, Corrections Communications Director Pam LaBorde said the department practices constitutionally sound policies and procedures in all areas including medical care and security and provides "adequate" care to any inmate in need of it.

The attorney general's office was less measured in their response, calling the letter a "diatribe" while adding they could not comment on the issue because of pending litigation with Wallace and Woodfox.

"However, we feel compelled to point out that Congressman Richmond soft pedaled a very important fact concerning these two individuals," the statement added. "Both of them were unanimously convicted for the murder of a young prison guard at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola after having already been convicted of other violent felonies."

Louisiana's prison systems are no stranger to oversight by federal officials. In July 2012, the Justice's civil rights division found officials at St. Tammany Parish Jail did not provide inmates with adequate access to mental health care and was "deliberately indifferent" to individual's suicide risks.

And just last month, a district judge approved a federal consent decree calling for sweeping changes at Orleans Parish Prison, including increased staffing and training.

Congressional Letter to DOJ Civil Rights Division



Four congressmen have asked the U.S. Justice Department to investigate conditions at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola.

SCOTT THRELKELD / STAFF ARCHIVE



Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Early Restoration Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees (Trustees) want to hear from you. The Trustees intend to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for early restoration, which is a part of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Your input and engagement are important. The Trustees encourage comments regarding the scope, content, and any important information they should consider in the PEIS.

LOUISIANA PUBLIC MEETING

July 18, 2013

6:30 PM CST

Courtyard Marriott
142 Library Boulevard
Houma, LA 70360

Comments may also be submitted via the internet at www.gulfpillrestoration.noaa.gov, or by mail to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 2099, Fairhope, AL 36533.

For more information about the Louisiana public meeting, please contact Drue Banta Winters at 225-235-4083, or email drue.banta@la.gov.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this meeting is asked to advise the Trustees at least 5 days before the meeting by calling Nanciann Regalado at 678-296-6805.



BRETT DUKE / STAFF ARCHIVE

House Democratic Caucus Chairman Rep. John Bel Edwards, D-Amite, led the call for a session to look at the line-item vetoes by Gov. Bobby Jindal.

Louisiana senators vote to block veto override session

Decision a blow to the disabled

By Lauren McGaughy
Staff writer

State senators in Louisiana have voted to block a veto override session, according to data released by the Senate early Friday. The session would have looked at line-item cuts and bills vetoed by Gov. Bobby Jindal after the 2013 legislative session.

A majority of both chambers was needed to trigger the veto override session. Of the 39 senators, 26 mailed in their ballots, an indication they were opposed to the session. Only 38 of the 105 representatives agreed with their colleagues in the upper chamber and voted against the session.

Calls for the session were spearheaded by House Democratic Caucus Chairman John Bel Edwards, D-Amite and by advocates unhappy with Jindal's decision to halt an expansion to programs for the disabled.

In late June, Jindal line-item vetoed a \$4 million expansion to the New Opportunity Waiver, or

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NOW, program, which provides in-home services for people with developmental disabilities. The additional funds would have made 200 more people eligible for the waivers. Currently, more than 10,000 Louisianians are on a 10-year waiting list.

Additional line-item vetoes included nearly \$800,000 to Children's Special Health Clinics and nearly \$1 million to the Individual and Family Support Program, which provides help with at-home care for children with developmental disabilities.

Reached for comment Friday morning, Bambi Polotzola of the disability advocacy group Override the Veto, said she was disappointed with the outcome but added her group would continue to push for increased funding.

"We as advocates will continue to seek ways to be able to get funding for these necessary services," she said, adding, "a

very strong grassroots advocacy network has been born."

Edwards said Friday he was unsurprised by the outcome. In the four decades since the current state constitution was enacted, lawmakers have never come together to vote in favor of such a session. The leadership of both chambers also came out early against the move, hindering the possibility of reconvening.

"That was the most likely outcome from the beginning, but I am disappointed because it appears we have too many legislators still deferring to the governor," Edwards said.

But he added the overwhelming support for the move among his colleagues was "encouraging," noting, "that means that there was a broad consensus in the House to side with the people over the governor and that certainly bodes well for the future."

Earlier this week, Health and Hospitals Secretary Kathy Kliebert indicated the department intended to shift the distribution of the NOW waiting list from first-come, first served to needs-based. Edwards said the move was a reaction to the outcry from disability advocates and that even if the list was improved, increased funding was still necessary.

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presented by

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| 13 Monaghan | High Hat Cafe | Short Stop PoBoys |
| Andrea's Restaurant | Huckleberry's Restaurant | Steak Knife Restaurant |
| Attiki Bar & Grill | Iris | Suis Generis |
| Baie Rouge | Italian Barrel | Sukho Thai |
| Basil Leaf | Jagerhaus | Sun Ray Grill |
| Best Life Pharmacy & Restaurant | J'aime Le Café | The Barley Oak |
| Between the Bread | Jamila's Cafe | The Country Club |
| Bistro Daisy | Joey K's | Vacherie Restaurant |
| Bombay Club | Jung's Golden Dragon | Vega Tapas Café |
| Booty's Street Food | Katie's Restaurant & Bar | Vianne's Tea House |
| Brazilian Market & Café | Koz's Harahan | Vom Fass |
| Buffet at Harrah's New Orleans | Koz's Lakeview | Wasabi Sushi & Asian Grill |
| Café Amelie | La Crepe Nanou | Who Dat Café (Café Nero) |
| Café at the Square | La Peniche' Restaurant | |
| Café Conti | Legal Perks | |
| Café Dauphine | Liberty's Kitchen | |
| Café Degas | Lost Love Lounge | |
| Café Minh | Louisiana Pizza Kitchen - French Market | |
| Capedeville | Louisiana Pizza Kitchen - Uptown | |
| Carmo | M Bistro at the Ritz-Carlton | |
| Chad's Bistro | Mariza | |
| Chef Ron's Gumbo Stop | Mark Twain's Pizza | |
| Christopher's on Carey | Martin Wine Cellar | |
| Cibugnú | Martinique Bistro | |
| Clover Grill | Mat & Naddies | |
| Crepe's A La Cart | Mayas | |
| Crescent Pie & Sausage | Meauxbar | |
| Delachaise Restaurant | Meltdown | |
| Dijon Restaurant | Mona Lisa | |
| Diva Dawg | Mondo | |
| Dominique's on Magazine | Muriel's Jackson Square | |
| EAT New Orleans | Nirvana | |
| Fatoush Mediterranean Grill | Ralph's On The Park | |
| Fausto's Bistro | Red Gravy | |
| Flaming Torch Restaurant | Redemption | |
| Galvez Restaurant | Restaurant des Familles | |
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