

Texas Tribune

ACLU Report Blasts Private Prisons

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A report released Thursday by the American Civil Liberties Union criticizes the private prison industry for profiting at the expense of a growing prison population.

The [report](#), titled "Banking on Bondage: Private Prisons and Mass Incarceration," accuses private prison companies of lobbying for laws that result in higher incarceration rates. Higher incarceration rates result in more government contracts, which, according to the report, are the primary source of funding for these companies.

"Mass incarceration needlessly wastes scarce tax dollars, contributes to torn communities, and disproportionately affects people of color; too many nonviolent offenders are behind bars, which contributes nothing to public safety," Terri Burke, executive director of the ACLU of Texas, said in a press release.

Two leading industry companies, Corrections Corporation of America and the GEO Group, received a combined \$3 billion in annual revenue in 2010. According to the report, the CCA acknowledged in records submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission that current sentencing laws increase the company's profits.

CCA officials could not be reached for comment. The GEO Group declined to comment.

In 2010, the U.S. prison population made up 25 percent of the world's prisoners, according to the Congressional Research Service. The U.S. incarcerates roughly 2.3 million people, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

In a press release, the ACLU said that lobbying and campaign contributions are two tactics used by private prison companies to secure more government contracts. The release also said that both CCA and GEO donated to Gov. [Rick Perry](#)'s 2010 gubernatorial campaign. Government contracts at the local, state and federal levels make up part of these companies' revenues.