

## PolitiCal

News and analysis on California politics

# Federal judge orders California to stop isolation housing of disabled inmates

By **PAIGE ST. JOHN**

FEBRUARY 3, 2015, 3:44 PM | REPORTING FROM SACRAMENTO

**A** federal judge in Oakland has ordered California to stop the "regular" practice of putting disabled inmates into segregation units because it lacks room elsewhere in its prisons.

The order by Judge Claudia Wilken, who also is hearing a class-action lawsuit over the state's use of solitary confinement, comes following hearings last week. Wilken on Tuesday ruled that California was violating the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as repeated court injunctions by confining disabled prisoners in cellblocks used to isolate those who violate rules.

Lawyers for prisoners and the state in 2012 had agreed on a plan to find more suitable housing within the state's crowded prison system. Even so, Wilken found, prison logs showed 211 disabled inmates had been put in the isolation cells in the past year, spending from one day to one month in the units. Most of those cases were at one prison -- R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego.

Jeffrey Callison, a spokesman for the corrections department, said the agency was reviewing the court's order but otherwise did not comment.

Lawyers for Atty. Gen. Kamala Harris, representing the corrections department, argued in court that the problems at the San Diego prison would best be resolved internally by state policy changes.

A corrections department administrator said the housing assignments were temporary as the state copes with unplanned need to move 400 to 600 inmates between prisons every week, some the result of other court orders to relocate prisoners at risk of contracting valley fever or to receive mental health care.

However, prisoners' lawyers cited cases where disabled inmates had been shunted to segregation cells at 10 other prisons. Examples included an inmate at

Deuel Vocational Center near Tracy who was put into isolation for three weeks because he uses a wheelchair. Other inmates elsewhere said being housed in isolation made them feel suicidal.

"I began to decompensate, my depression and paranoia became much worse, and I started experiencing frequent nightmares," one inmate, who required a cane to walk and was held in segregation for 10 weeks while waiting for a bottom bunk in regular housing, wrote in a sworn statement filed in court. "Things got so bad that I seriously thought about taking my life."

Inmates in these segregation units complained they spent most of their time locked in their cells, with limited access to exercise. They also were subjected to strip searches and shackling -- conditions imposed on others put into isolation for dangerous behavior. Some said their access to mail, personal property and telephones also were restricted.

California's care of disabled prisoners has been the subject of a 20-year class-action lawsuit, which includes Tuesday's order.

Copyright © 2015, Los Angeles Times

---

## FROM AROUND THE WEB

Sponsored Links by Taboola

**New England Patriots' Latest Cheating Scandal**  
OMG Photo

**This Dinner Hack Has Millennials Ditching Delivery**  
Real Simple for Plated

**Want to Make Your Bank Mad? Try This Mortgage Trick**  
Bills.com

**The Most Epic Pool Parties in Vegas**  
Expedia Viewfinder

**Someone Stumbled Across Something Deep In The Woods - Beneath It Was One of History's Darkest Secrets**  
ViralNova

**The \$1.58 Billion Secret Apple Hid in Your iPhone**  
The Motley Fool

**#1 WORST Exercise That Ages You Faster**