



For Immediate Release
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**STATEMENT OF BIPARTISAN NATIONAL PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION
COMMISSION ON TEXAS YOUTH COMMISSION SEXUAL ABUSE SCANDAL**

Panel Adds Discussion on Texas Youth Commission to Upcoming Hearings in Austin

Washington, DC – The National Prison Rape Elimination Commission (NPREC) today released the following statement concerning the recent revelations of sexual assault of juveniles under the supervision of the Texas Youth Commission, resulting in the resignation or ousting of several top officials.

“While Texas has been making a concerted effort to reduce sexual violence in its corrections facilities, we are deeply dismayed by the charges of sexual assaults by staff against children who were under the supervision and protection of the Texas Youth Commission and by the apparently deliberate cover-up of that abuse.

“We commend the commitment of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor and leading state legislators to investigate these charges and to ascertain whether criminal prosecutions are in order. We also commend their commitment to ascertain what systemic changes may be required, including new oversight mechanisms, to ensure TYC adequately protects the children in its care.

“Nevertheless, the state’s first priority should be to ensure the immediate safety of all the children in TYC’s custody. We urge the state to immediately develop mechanisms that will effectively protect them from sexual abuse by staff, as well as by other detained youth, and to inform the children of the steps they can follow without fear of retaliation should they experience abuse or the threat of it.

“Preventing sexual assault must be a top priority in every detention facility in the United States. Zero tolerance is the only acceptable standard. We trust that Texas has a zero-tolerance policy, and consistent with that policy will take the necessary steps to insure that it is enforced.

“The Commission will include a discussion of the TYC developments in our public hearings in Texas later this month. We hope to learn much from this situation about the critical issues of reporting and prevention, oversight, and the particular vulnerability of young people.”

The Commission will hold its seventh public hearing on March 26-27, 2007, at the University of Texas School of Law in Austin. Witnesses will testify about the situation in lock ups in general, Native American detention facilities in general, and lessons from the Texas correctional system.

The National Prison Rape Elimination Commission is charged with developing zero-tolerance national standards for enhancing the detection, prevention, reduction, and punishment of sexual violence behind bars. The Commissioners are federal district judge Reggie B. Walton, who serves as Chairman; Vice Chairman John A. Kaneb, Chairman of the Board of Directors of HP Hood LLC; James Aiken, President of James E. Aiken & Associates, Inc.; Jamie Fellner, Esq., Director of the United States Program of Human Rights Watch; Pat Nolan, President of Justice Fellowship; Gustavus A. Puryear IV, Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary of Corrections Corporation of America; Professor Brenda V. Smith of American University's Washington College of Law; and Dr. Cindy Struckman-Johnson, Professor of Psychology at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion.

To learn more about the Commission, please visit www.nprec.us.

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