

Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowship Applauds Congressional Funding of Prisoner Rape Elimination Act

Prison Fellowship, the nation's largest Christian nonprofit serving prisoners, former prisoners, and their families, is applauding a major funding increase for the Prisoner Rape Elimination Act (PREA) by the U.S. House of Representatives. PREA, which creates policies to curb sexual abuse behind bars, was originally spearheaded by conservative leaders including Prison Fellowship's late founder, Chuck Colson.

"Sexual assault should never be a part of a prison sentence for incarcerated youth, women and men," said James Ackerman, president and chief executive officer of Prison Fellowship. "This critical funding increase will help jails and prisons meet basic standards for safe, humane treatment and make our criminal justice system more rehabilitative."

PREA standards, which include improved training, detection, investigation and punishment of incidents of sexual assault, make correctional facilities safer for both the incarcerated and corrections officers. The goal is to reduce and one day end the scourge of sexual assault behind bars.

"Our justice system is founded on the belief that everyone has equal value before the law—no matter what they stand accused of," said Craig DeRoche, senior vice president of advocacy and public policy. "Their basic human dignity must not disappear once they are arrested."

The spending bill provides \$15.5 million for PREA programs—a 50 percent increase over the amount in last year's budget and is expected to receive approval from the Senate, before going

to President Trump for his signature.

Prison Fellowship would like to thank Rep. John Culberson, R-Texas, the chairman of the House Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations Subcommittee, as well as ranking member Rep. Jose Serrano, D-N.Y. In the Senate, Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., and ranking member Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-New Hampshire, also deserve recognition for their key role in pushing for a funding increase.

In addition, the increase in PREA spending was supported by Attorney General Jeff Sessions in his budget request, as well as bipartisan letters throughout the appropriations process in the House and Senate led by Reps. Randy Hultgren, R-Illinois, and Bobby Scott, D-Va. as well as Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas and Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii.