

What is the HALT bill? What would it do?

A2500 Aubry / S1623 Sepulveda – Here are some of the changes that the HALT bill would bring...

- Limit the time an inmate can spend in segregated confinement to 15 consecutive days or 20 total days in a sixty day period.
- End segregated confinement for “special populations”, considered to be persons 21 years of age and under, as well as persons age 55 and older.
- Restrict the criteria of offenses that can result in confinement in Special Housing Units.

Why we oppose the HALT bill?

While some of the treatment and rehabilitative provisions of the bill may be worthy of consideration, the failure of this bill to adequately consider the safety and well-being of all those working and living within the prison system cannot be ignored. If enacted, HALT will further restrict security staff’s ability to utilize effective disciplinary measures, when necessary. Further restrictions will jeopardize the safety of staff and inmates and the care, custody and control of the correctional facilities could be compromised.

NEED SOME TALKING POINTS?

- The HALT bill was introduced before the recent New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) lawsuit settlement was agreed to. The bill in its current form is outdated. The State of New York and the NYCLU entered into an interim settlement agreement in 2014 which severely over-hauled SHU policy in New York State prisons. To date the entire settlement agreement has not even been fully implemented.
- Even though the SHU reforms that were brought on by the NYCLU settlement were supposed to have a positive impact on the safety and security of NYS prisons, in fact, the exact opposite has occurred. Violence in our state prison system is at an all-time high despite significant reforms to SHU. In addition, the plethora of safety initiatives (fixed & body cameras, OC spray, de-escalation training) implemented by DOCCS have failed to quell the violence. Since *NYCLU* began its implementation, violence has been on a steady incline - with no end in sight.
- We need to understand why violence continues to rise in our prisons. Since *NYCLU* was implemented the department’s stats on violence have skyrocketed. Before we consider further reforms to SHU, we are calling on the formation of a bi-partisan commission to initiate a study to determine the reasons why violence continues to plague our system. Only until we understand the reasons that violence is so prevalent, will we be best suited to develop sound policy to address the issue.