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**BIPARTISAN COMMISSION: TEXAS YOUTH COMMISSION SCANDAL  
“CAN TEACH THE NATION MUCH”**

*Panel Calls for “Zero-Tolerance” Approach to Sexual Violence Behind Bars*

*Austin, Texas* – The National Prison Rape Elimination Commission today released the following statement at the conclusion of hearings examining the Texas Youth Commission scandal and the state’s response. The panel also took testimony on sexual violence in lockups and Native American detention facilities:

“The situation at the TYC is a harsh reminder of the particular vulnerability of young people in criminal detention. Unfortunately, these problems may be occurring in juvenile facilities across the nation. As tragic as the TYC situation is, it can teach the nation much about the critical issues of reporting, prevention and oversight in these facilities, wherever they may be. Zero tolerance is the only acceptable standard.

“We commend the commitment of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, leading legislators and the Special Master to fully investigate these allegations and bring any charges that may be in order. We also applaud their commitment to ascertain what systemic changes are required, including new oversight and reporting mechanisms as well as training, to ensure the TYC fully protects the children in its care.

“We are particularly grateful for the brave testimony given by family members of victims of sexual violence in Texas facilities. Their stories remind us of how much work remains to be done to make sure the basic human rights and dignity of all people are valued and protected, including those in detention. One instance of sexual assault is too many.

“We also learned much this week about the potential for sexual violence in so-called “lockups” – detention facilities, usually housed in police stations, courthouses or county jails, in which accused persons are held before their cases can be adjudicated. These lockups are often out of the

view of authorities and hold many people, often mixing violent and non-violent offenders, as well as people of different ages and mental capacities. They are also subject to less rigorous supervision by staff than other facilities.

“Any comprehensive approach to preventing sexual assault in detention must take account of the special problems and vulnerabilities in lockups. The commission will address these facilities when it offers its report and recommendations.

“Finally, too little scrutiny has been given to the special problems of sexual violence in Native American detention facilities. The testimony we heard confirmed for us that many Native American nations face severe fiscal constraints that undermine the safe operation of tribal facilities. We are also concerned about how often and how thoroughly incidents of sexual violence that rise to the felony level are investigated and prosecuted by federal authorities. Further, Native Americans detained in non-tribal facilities face particular challenges. The testimony we heard this week underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to reducing the problem of sexual violence in Native American facilities.

“2.3 million men and women are incarcerated in the United States. The victims of sexual aggression and assault in detention, like sexual abuse victims anywhere, will deal for the rest of their lives with its devastating physical and psychological repercussions.

“Preventing sexual violence behind bars must be a top priority in every detention facility in the United States.”

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. This was the Commission’s eighth public event.

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 Aiken & Associates, Inc.; Jamie Fellner, Esq., Director of the U.S. Program of Human Rights Watch; Pat Nolan, President of Justice Fellowship; Gus Puryear, Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary of Corrections Corporation of America; Professor Brenda V. Smith, American University, 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](http://www.nprec.us).