



For Immediate Release
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**NATIONAL PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION COMMISSION STATEMENT
ON SENTENCING OF FORMER CORRECTIONS OFFICIAL AND IMPORTANCE OF
CREDIBLE SANCTIONS FOR PRISON SEXUAL ABUSE**

Washington, DC – The bipartisan National Prison Rape Elimination Commission today issued the following statement on the April 18 sentencing of a former corrections officer to 20 years in prison for sexually assaulting an inmate under his supervision, underscoring the importance of credible sanctions for sexual abuse of persons in custody:

“The April 18 sentencing of former New Hampshire corrections officer Douglas Tower to 20 years in prison for the sexual assault of a female inmate under his supervision at the Shea Farm halfway house was both tough and appropriate. We hope this case will underscore the need for law enforcement officials to address sexual assault in detention. Mr. Tower’s crimes also illustrate the problems that can arise in cross-gender supervision of inmates, particularly supervision of female inmates by male guards.

“Credible sanctions in cases of prison sexual assault are key to holding officials accountable for breaking the law, violating the public trust, and abusing people in their custody. This successful prosecution will encourage law enforcement officials and prosecutors to take staff sexual assault in detention much more seriously than has often been the case. We applaud the dedication of prosecuting attorney Kirsten Wilson, Judge Carol Ann Conboy and all those in New Hampshire who gave this case the attention it merited.

“Sexual violence behind bars – staff-on-inmate as well as inmate-on-inmate – is a significant, if still poorly understood, national problem. When prisoners allege sexual abuse, as when any resident alleges a crime, their allegations must be thoroughly investigated and vigorously prosecuted. When perpetrators are found guilty, sentencing should match the serious nature of the crime and send the message to potential wrongdoers and the community that no one is above the law or below the law – that everyone deserves protection.

“Over two 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. 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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