

**AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO****J. David Cox, Sr.**National President  
October 8, 2015**Eugene Hudson, Jr.**

National Secretary-Treasurer

**Augusta Y. Thomas**National Vice President  
for Women and Fair Practices

The Honorable Charles Grassley  
Chairman  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20002

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Leahy,

On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), which represents 670,000 federal employees including over 39,000 working in the Federal Bureau of Prisons, I'm writing today in support of S. 2123, the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015. This bipartisan legislation will provide much needed relief to the overcrowded prison population which has created an unsafe work environment for thousands of federal correctional workers. The federal prison population has exploded from 25,000 in 1980 to over 200,000 today. This increase has made it drastically more difficult for correctional workers to safely do their jobs and keep dangerous inmates secured behind bars.

This bill contains several provisions for which AFGE has been fighting for several years. We were extremely pleased to see the inclusion of the Eric Williams Correctional Officer Protection Act into the underlying text. This important workplace safety provision would authorize federal correctional workers to routinely carry pepper spray for self-defense. The stand-alone bill (S. 238) was named after Correctional Officer Eric Williams, who was brutally murdered by an inmate at the United States Penitentiary in Canaan, PA in February 2013. We applaud the Judiciary Committee for honoring Eric's memory by including this important workplace safety language in the underlying bill.

We were also pleased to see this bill address one of the main causes of prison overcrowding: mandatory minimums. By making modest reforms to mandatory minimum sentences, Congress will be moving our country in a "smart on crime" direction instead of the overly punitive "tough on crime" days of the 1980s and 1990s. Reducing mandatory minimums will help alleviate overcrowding which will make correctional workers across the country safer. This legislation also eliminates the "three strikes" law and expands the federal safety valve so that judges are able to impose sentences commensurate with the crime committed instead of having their hands tied by statutory minimums. AFGE commends the work this bipartisan team has put together and happily supports the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015.

Sincerely yours,

Beth Moten  
Legislative and Political Director

