

January 9, 2017

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Feinstein:

I write to highlight for the committee Sen. Jeff Sessions' indispensable role in working with the late Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MD), Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), and me to pass the landmark Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003. With his leadership and support, the bill passed both the Senate and House without objection and was signed into law by President George W. Bush. PREA stands as a testament to Sen. Sessions' commitment to justice for all Americans, and advocacy for the "least of these."

I believe that Sen. Sessions, like me, was moved by the passionate advocacy of the late Chuck Colson in support of this effort. In his capacity providing prison ministry in the years following his own federal sentence, Colson understood the devastating impact of sexual assaults against women, men and children in detention. Thanks to his efforts and a coalition of advocacy organizations on the right and left, Sen. Sessions was able to author this bill and secure Senate support and passage.

Nearly 15 years since its enactment, the standards established under PREA and the resources provided to state and local systems to support the implementation of the standards are changing lives and preventing an untold number of sexual assault in jails, prisons, and other confinement facilities at the federal, state and local levels. Today, 11 states are in full compliance with the standards, and another 41 states and territories are working towards successful implementation. This is a remarkable step forward in the effort to end the scourge of sexual assault in prisons.

As Attorney General, Sen. Sessions will enter office at an important moment where most states are on the cusp of coming into compliance with the law he authored. I can think of no better example to highlight his commitment to justice and his capacity to better protect all Americans.

Sincerely,

Congressman Frank R. Wolf (ret.)
1981-2014