

NEWS RELEASE



Private Corrections Institute (www.privateci.org)

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For Immediate Release

Private Corrections Institute Issues First Annual Awards for Activism, Advocacy and Reporting Related to Private Prisons

Tallahassee, Florida – Today, the Private Corrections Institute (PCI), a non-profit watchdog organization, issued its first annual awards for individual activism, organizational advocacy and excellence in news reporting related to the private prison industry. PCI opposes the privatization of correctional services, including the operation of prisons and jails by for-profit companies.

PCI's first annual award for excellence in reporting on the private prison industry was awarded to journalist **Beau Hodai**, who publishes DBA Press (www.dbapress.com), for his investigative reporting into issues related to Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and the Boca Raton, Florida-based GEO Group – the nation's two largest for-profit prison firms.

Beau broke the news story about CCA's involvement in highly controversial anti-immigrant legislation in Arizona known as SB 1070 – a story that was subsequently picked up by other media, including National Public Radio. He also wrote about Charles L. Overby, CEO of the Freedom Forum, a foundation dedicated to the First Amendment, who also serves as a board member of CCA – a company that has fought against transparency and the public's right to know about its operation of correctional facilities. Additionally, Beau reported on political connections between GEO Group and Florida lawmakers in connection with an FBI probe involving the GEO-operated Blackwater River Correctional Facility.

"The individuals who comprise the Private Corrections Institute are amazingly knowledgeable, dedicated, skilled and resourceful. To know that this group has found my work worthy of recognition is a deep honor," Beau stated.

Frank Smith received PCI's first annual award for exceptional activism against the privatization of correctional services. Frank, who previously served as PCI's field organizer assisting local communities in site fights against private prisons, is now a consultant for the Private Corrections Working Group. He is a retired Alaska state social worker and was elected to offices in three states, including two terms in the Kansas Silver Haired Legislature. Further, Frank authored a chapter in *Capitalist Punishment*, a 2003 anthology, titled "Incarceration of Native Americans and Private Prisons." He has long been an opponent of prison privatization.

"The for-profit prison industry is so corruptive, dangerous and larcenous that it makes opposing their expansion plans a good deal easier than it might otherwise be, were they simply exploitative," Frank said upon accepting the award.

Finally, PCI's first annual award for outstanding advocacy against the privatization of correctional services was awarded to **Grassroots Leadership**, a North Carolina-based non-profit organization. Grassroots Leadership has been involved in the fight against private prisons – including site fights, community organizing, legislative advocacy and research – for over a decade.

The organization was instrumental in pushing for the closure of the CCA-run Dawson State Jail in Texas in 2013, and has produced numerous reports concerning the private prison industry that include “Corrections Corporation of America: A Critical Look at its First Twenty Years” (2003); “Operation Streamline: Costs and Consequences” (Sept. 2012); “The Dirty Thirty: Nothing to Celebrate About 30 Years of Corrections Corporation of America” (July 2013); and most recently, “Locked Up & Shipped Away: Interstate Prisoner Transfer and the Private Prison Industry” (Nov. 2013). The award was presented to Grassroots Leadership's executive director, Bob Libal.

“The mass incarceration and detention of people for the profit of corporations is one of the moral outrages of our time,” Libal noted. “For years, the work of the Private Corrections Institute has been instrumental in exposing this industry. It's an honor for Grassroots Leadership to receive this award.”

“PCI is pleased to recognize the contributions of these awardees to the ongoing debate over the privatization of correctional services,” said PCI president Alex Friedmann, who served six years at a CCA-run prison in the 1990s prior to his release in 1999. “PCI believes that incarcerating people for the purpose of generating corporate profit is immoral and has no place in a democratic society. Activism and advocacy against prison privatization, as well as accurate reporting on the private prison industry, are necessary to confront and end this social injustice.”

The next PCI awards will be issued in January 2015.

For more information, please contact:

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The Private Corrections Institute (www.privateci.org) is a non-profit citizen watchdog organization that works to educate the public about the significant dangers and pitfalls associated with the privatization of correctional services. PCI maintains an online collection of news reports and other resources related to the private prison industry, and maintains the position that for-profit prisons have no place in a free and democratic society.