

Apr 15, 2021 knkx.org

Inslee signs bill banning private prisons, including Tacoma ICE facility

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee signed a bill Wednesday banning all private, for-profit prisons. The new law means the privately run Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in Tacoma will have to close after its contract expires in 2025. Due to the pandemic, the number of people being detained there is at a record low -- about 200. Still, activist Maru Mora Villalpando of La Resistencia says the possibility of rising COVID cases inside the facility remains a concern. "There's no need for people to be detained," she said. "Some people in detention have said forever, 'I'm not saying to stop my deportation. I will continue my deportation process, but I don't have to be detained if I'm with my family and if I'm able to be with them and not be a burden to them, it's easier for me to fight my case.'" ICE says the private prison ban won't prevent immigration enforcement but could require the transfer of detainees. GEO Group, the private prison company that runs the Tacoma facility, called the signing of the bill "political theater."