



Analysis released on inmate rapes in Nevada

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About one in every 677 Nevada prison inmates reported being raped or having nonconsensual sex with other inmates in 2004, an newly-released analysis of federal figures shows.

The 15 claims of sexual assault and nonconsensual sex by 10,152 prisoners ranked Nevada 13th nationally in reports per capita of inmate population in the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics report, the first compiled under the 2003 federal Prison Rape Elimination Act.

Six of the claims were found to be unsubstantiated, the report released Sunday said.

Nevada also is one of 21 states that may count less serious sexual interactions like touching with the claims of rape and nonconsensual sex, the report said. Nevada's rate of one claim for every 677 inmates still ranked 16th nationally when the less serious acts in other states are counted.

Inmate rape was one of the topics at a meeting last week of state prison wardens, said Fritz Schlottman, spokesman for the Nevada Department of Corrections.

"It's something that shouldn't occur, and it's something we're going to take steps to eliminate," Schlottman said.

He expects a report will be given to Gov. Kenny Guinn by the end of the year on steps the state can take to reduce inmate rape.

"A lot of federal funding is tied to performance on this issue," Schlottman said. "It's not optional."

The legislation was introduced in 2003 with the support of the NAACP, the Christian Coalition and the Southern Baptist Convention, said Dan Scandling, press spokesman for U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., one of the primary sponsors of the bill.

"Guys are going in on minimum sentences, they're getting raped, and they're coming out with HIV or hepatitis, and they're bringing that back into the community," Scandling said.

Other national problems include young male inmates being targeted by veteran inmates and guards sexually assaulting inmates, Scandling said.

The Nevada Attorney General's Office did not have figures on inmates prosecuted for raping or having nonconsensual sex acts with other inmates, said Conrad Hafen, chief of the criminal division. Hafen said he was aware of a handful of cases in the last two years.

"One of the more difficult issues is having an inmate victim willing to come forward and testify,"

Hafen said. "Given the prison setting, it's very difficult for them to be willing to come forward and cooperate with law enforcement."

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