

LOBBY WATCH



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JailsRUs

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Bills Facilitate Locking Up Immigrant Families, Kids

**Private Prisons Pay 10 Texas Lobbyists Up to \$480,000.
Industry Gave Texas Politicians \$225,205.**

To circumvent judicial [rulings](#) against holding immigrant children in detention centers, Orwellian Texas lawmakers are considering a bill that would license detention centers as child-care facilities.

The identical [SB 1018](#) and [HB 2225](#) would allow for [prolonged detentions](#) of immigrant families and children in for-profit family detention camps. The Obama administration expanded such detentions, which the Trump administration is accelerating. With recent immigrant raids in [Austin](#), [Waco](#) and [Laredo](#), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has a record 41,000 people locked up—with more than 70 percent [held](#) by private contractors. The industry also could get a boost from [SB 4](#)'s crack down on “sanctuary cities” that do not honor voluntary and legally [questionable](#) immigration detainers.

The legislation is a gift to private prison giants GEO Group and CoreCivic (previously Corrections Corporation of America). They operate two Texas family detention centers: the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley (CoreCivic) and Karnes County Residential Center in Karnes City (GEO).

With competitor Management & Training Corp. and Williams Scotsman, which [leases](#) the Dilley detention facilities to CoreCivic,¹ private prison interests currently are paying 10 lobbyists up to \$480,000 to lobby Texas officials. The up to \$320,000 that GEO group is paying five Texas lobbyists accounts for two-thirds of this tab. Longtime top GEO lobbyist Lionel Aguirre represents the company in both Austin and [Washington](#). Weeks before Trump's election, GEO's federal lobby team also [retained](#) two former [aides](#) of Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, the new attorney general.

Data obtained by activists show that immigrants held in privately run detention centers make more calls to a federal hotline for [complaints](#) about physical and sexual assaults than do immigrants held in facilities directly overseen by ICE. In one case, four witnesses reportedly saw another detainee [rape](#) Douglas Menjivar at the GEO-run Joe Corley Detention Center in Conroe in September 2013. Many people, including child-welfare advocates and medical professionals, testified against [SB 1018](#) and HB 2225 in the legislature. Only GEO and one woman representing herself testified in [favor](#).

2017 Private Prison Lobby

Prison Company	Texas Lobbyist	Min. Value Of Contract	Max. Value Of Contract
Geo Group (up to \$320,000)	Lionel Aguirre	\$50,000	\$100,000
"	Stephanie Gibson	\$50,000	\$100,000
"	Frank Santos	\$50,000	\$100,000
"	Gabriel Sepulveda	\$0	\$10,000
"	Whitney Slade	\$0	\$10,000
Mgmt. & Training Corp. (up to \$75,000)	Allen Place	\$25,000	\$50,000
"	Shea Place	\$10,000	\$25,000
CoreCivic (up to \$60,000)	Demetrius McDaniel	\$25,000	\$50,000
"	Aaron Cole Gregg	\$0	\$10,000
Williams Scotsman ¹	Jay Howard	\$10,000	\$25,000
	TOTALS	\$220,000	\$480,000

President Trump has a more favorable view on private lock ups. “With prisons I do think we can do a lot of privatizations and private prisons,” he said on the campaign trail. “It seems to work a lot better.” Private prison stock prices have [doubled](#) since Trump rode his anti-immigrant message to an upset victory in November.²

capturing the biggest share of this prison cash were Gov. Greg Abbott (\$55,000), Senate Criminal Justice Committee Chair John Whitmire (\$25,000), and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick (\$12,500). Private prison interests also gave at least \$10,000 apiece to several Republican leadership groups and to the Texas Legislative Black Caucus.

GEO recently [announced](#) that it landed a \$110 million federal contract to build a new immigrant detention center next to the existing Joe Corley Detention Center in Conroe. Both facilities will be in the district of Sen. Brandon Creighton. The \$6,000 that Creighton collected from GEO in recent years makes him that industry’s No. 2 rank-and-file lawmaker after Senate Criminal Justice Committee Chair John Whitmire.



Sen. Creighton

Some Texas officials who openly question the value of spending state funds on mass incarceration are more receptive to the practice when it’s done on Uncle Sam’s dime. The head judges of the state’s highest criminal and civil courts recently [endorsed](#) a bail-reform bill ([SB 1338](#)). They argued that we needlessly spend \$1 billion a year to lock up indigent, minority defendants who pose no public threat. Yet lawmakers seem intent on expanding indefinite detentions of Central American families fleeing violence—provided that it’s billed to *federal* taxpayers. Meanwhile, a bill to keep juveniles out of privately owned or operated detention centers has yet to get a hearing ([HB 3325](#)).

PACs and executives affiliated with GEO Group, CoreCivic and prison health company Correct Care Solutions gave Texas politicians more than \$225,205 since 2013. The politicians

Private Prison Contributors Active in Texas (2013 through 2016)

Amount	Contributor
\$193,000	GEO Group PAC
\$15,000	Correct Care Solutions
\$13,750	CoreCivic (prev. Corrections Corp. of Am.)
\$1,955	Jorge Dominicis (ret. Geo Care president)
\$1,500	Reed E Smith (Geo Group VP)
\$225,205	TOTAL

Texas Recipients of Private Prison Contributions (2013 through 2016)

Amount	Recipient
\$55,000	Gov. Greg Abbott (R)
\$25,000	Repub. State Leadership Com.
\$25,000	Senate Repub. Caucus
\$25,000	Sen. John Whitmire (D)
\$15,000	TX Legislative Black Caucus
\$12,500	Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick (R)
\$10,000	TX Repub. Legislative Caucus
\$7,000	Speaker Joe Straus (R)
\$6,000	Sen. Brandon Creighton (R)
\$6,000	A.G. Ken Paxton (R)
\$3,500	Rep. Tan Parker (R)
\$3,000	Sen. Leticia Van de Putte (D)
\$2,250	Rep. Cecil Bell Jr. (R)
\$2,000	Rep. Doug Miller (R)
\$1,500	<i>Sen. Donna Campbell (R)</i>
\$1,500	Sen. Jane Nelson (R)
\$1,500	Rep. John Otto (R)
\$1,500	Rep. Sylvester Turner (D)
\$1,500	<i>Sen. Carlos Uresti (D)</i>
\$1,500	Sen. Judith Zaffirini (D)
\$1,250	Rep. Phil King (R)
\$1,250	Rep. Tracy King (D)
\$1,250	Rep. James White (R)
\$1,000	Rep. Lance Gooden (R)
\$1,000	Sen. Juan 'Chuy' Hinojosa (D)
\$1,000	Sen. Joan Huffman (R)
\$1,000	Rep. Richard Raymond (D)
\$955	<i>Sen. Bob Hall (R)</i>

Amount	Recipient
\$500	Rep. Terry Canales (D)
\$500	Rep. Drew Darby (R)
\$500	Sen. Bob Deuell (R)
\$500	Sen. Kevin Eltife (R)
\$500	Rep. Abel Herrero (D)
\$500	Rep. Mark Keough (R)
\$500	Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (R)
\$500	<i>Sen. 'Eddie' Lucio, Jr. (D)</i>
\$500	Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer (D)
\$500	Sen. Robert Lee Nichols (R)
\$500	Rep. John Raney (R)
\$500	<i>Sen. Jose Rodriguez (D)</i>
\$500	Sen. Larry Taylor (R)
\$500	Rep. John Zerwas (R)
\$250	Rep. Garnet Coleman (D)
\$250	<i>Rep. Charles Geren (R)</i>
\$250	<i>Rep. Ryan Guillen (D)</i>
\$250	Rep. 'Roland' Gutierrez (D)
\$250	Sen. Bryan Hughes (R)
\$250	Rep. Oscar Longoria (D)
\$250	Rep. 'Eddie' Lucio III (D)
\$250	Rep. Armando Martinez (D)
\$250	Rep. Sergio Munoz, Jr. (D)
\$250	Rep. Justin Rodriguez (D)
\$250	Rep. Toni Rose (D)
\$250	Rep. Senfronia Thompson (D)
\$250	Rep. Paul Workman (R)
\$225,205	TOTAL

*Italics: Member of House or Senate committee hearing detention bills.*³

¹ The global prefab building company [Algeco/Scotsman](#) Holdings operates as Williams Scotsman and Target Logistics in North America. Target Logistics [leases](#) Dilley detention facilities to CoreCivic. Its alter ego, Williams Scotsman, has retained Texas lobbyist Jay Howard.

² GEO Group stock increased 80 percent; CoreCivic stock jumped 120 percent.

³ Senate Veteran Affairs & Border Security Committee and House State Affairs Committee.