

# OPINION

## The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition their Government for a redress of grievances.



### Letters to the Editor Policy

The Sentinel welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

### Political/Election Letters:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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## Who benefits most from more prisons?

the Prison Fellowship, there has been a 14-fold increase of women in prison since 1970, and 80 percent of them are single mothers.

Whether guilty or innocent, men and women often spend weeks, months and sometimes years in prison awaiting trial for non-violent crimes, losing their jobs, homes and custody

Refugee Service (LIRS) and Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), between October 2013 and September 2014, the U.S. government apprehended 68,334 children accompanied by a parent at the southwest border — a 361 percent increase since the previous year.

Keep in mind that more than half of all the children

corporation GEO Group answered the call with the Karnes Detention Center in Texas, which recently broke ground at that site in order to double its capacity.

Another detention center was opened by Correction Corporation of America (CCA) in 2015 that holds 819 mothers and 1,000 children in a lock-down style facility.

Both GEO Group and CCA have had facilities closed in the past (Artesia Detention Center and Hutto Detention center, respectively) due to allegations of abuse and poor living conditions — only to re-open somewhere else with a government contract.

While I think we all agree that our borders should never be a revolving door, particularly in an era with the constant threats of global terrorism and illegal drugs, one must ask who stands to benefit most from an ever-expanding system of prisons and detention centers.

And whether tax dollars given to corporate prisons and detention centers is money well spent, or money spent to pretend that all is well.

### From the Managing Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

In an interview on NPR last May, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen compared the Trump administration's "Zero Tolerance" policy to the same policy experienced by incarcerated Americans every day in this country who are separated from their children.

"If you break the law, you will be prosecuted. It's no different than what we do every day in every part of the United States when an adult commits a crime," Nielsen said. "We're following that same policy at our borders."

And she's absolutely correct.

In fact, we have a long history of state-sanctioned family separation that continues as a widespread practice today — particularly in our justice system, where approximately 2.7 million children have a parent behind bars.

And the fastest growing group of prisoners?

Women.

According to a report by

of their children before they've even had a chance to plead their case.

The fact is, the current "law and order" approach isn't new either. It was echoed by President Nixon in the late 1960s, as well as Presidents Reagan and Clinton and their attempts to combat the drug war by creating massive prison expansions to keep up with the demands of higher incarceration rates.

In addition to prisons, in 2014 the U.S. government massively expanded its detention centers for immigrant families.

According to reports from the Lutheran Immigration and

who entered into family detention facilities in that time were six years old or younger.

And that was before the "Zero Tolerance" posture taken by past Attorney General Jeff Sessions, which compounded the problem by demanding enforcement without the necessary resources to do so humanely.

But this is not a problem that is unique to the Trump administration, although its poor handling of it has made it uniquely terrible.

When the Obama administration began detaining families in large facilities back in 2014, for-profit correctional



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