

Private Prisons

Social Criteria Investment Screen



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council – November 2014 CC14.11.18

Authority: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) affirms the fundamental principles of due process of law and the presumption of legal innocence as foundational to the U.S. criminal justice system. Yet, this church hears people's cries that challenge the current system's serious deficiencies and has addressed them in its social teaching document *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (2013).

Wording of the Screen: The ELCA recommends no investment in private, for-profit prisons including firms involved in prison privatization of the criminal justice system.

Definition of Problem: The concerns of this Church about privatizing prisons are theological, moral and economic. The ELCA holds that it is the role of government, not the market to restrain evil.¹ The moral reason is that the role of the state in the operation of prisons should not be supplanted by economic players who are guided primarily by profit or production. Contracting with private firms invites problems with successful offender reintegration into society, reduced services including medical care, education, job training and counseling. Such contracts invite offenses that even can become serious human rights abuses such as lack of medical and mental health care, lack of basic hygiene or holding male and female prisoners in the same area to name a few. The ELCA urges governments at every level to maintain its responsibility and eliminate reliance on the use of private, for-profit prisons.

Recognizing that various investors will implement this along a continuum, for the purpose of this screen, investments include those which could be made in private, for-profit prison corporations and those also which could be made in companies involved in the marketing of, the supplying of key components for or the provision of services (such as food service or health care services) to private, for-profit prisons.

Social policy and studies:

The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries [ELCA, 2013]

<http://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Criminal-Justice>

Community Violence [ELCA, 1994]

http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Community_ViolenceSM.pdf

