



Building Community Not Prisons Coalition Applauds House of Representatives for Stopping the Fast-Tracking of a New Federal Prison in Letcher County

Section 219 in the FY24 House Appropriations Bill would have fast-tracked the construction of a new federal prison in Letcher County, costing taxpayers more than \$505 million dollars.

Whitesburg, Kentucky - Today, the [Building Community Not Prisons Coalition](#) applauded the House of Representatives for removing Section 219 from the FY24 House Appropriations Bill.

Section 219 would have fast-tracked the construction of a new federal prison on a former mining site in Letcher County, Kentucky, costing taxpayers more than \$505 million dollars. Section 219 also would have exempted the Attorney General and Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons from being subject to judicial review, essentially shielding FCI Letcher from liability for any abuses committed there against incarcerated people or prison staff.

“We are grateful to the House of Representatives for choosing not to fast-track the construction of a prison on a toxic former mining site. If constructed, FCI Letcher would have been the [fifth federal prison](#) in eastern Kentucky. At the same time, Section 219 would have shielded the prison from federal scrutiny,” said Kandia Milton, Government Affairs Director at [Dream.Org](#). “Put simply, FCI Letcher is a human rights disaster waiting to happen. We are grateful to the fellow advocates, members of the public, Representative Alma Adams and her staff, for their efforts to remove this harmful fast tracking language from the FY24 House Appropriations bill.”

Both the [Trump](#) and [Biden](#) Administrations had requested that the original \$505 million funding for the prison be rescinded, and [top officials](#) at the Department of Justice publicly stated this new construction was unnecessary due to a declining federal prison population.

“Section 219 would have gutted a vital, federally-mandated environmental review process and set an incredibly dangerous precedent for federal oversight in prisons, both in Kentucky and across the country. We are incredibly grateful that this harmful language has been removed from the FY24 House Appropriations bill,” said Dr. Artie Ann Bates, Secretary of [Concerned Letcher Countians](#). “The construction of additional unnecessary prisons is not a viable economic program. What Kentucky residents need is real investment in our communities.”

After years of opposition, in 2019, the Federal Bureau of Prisons chose not to construct a penitentiary in Letcher County.

More than 185 organizations also previously [signed a letter](#) to Congress urging them to remove Section 219 in the FY24 House Appropriations bill, including:

- Abolitionist Law Center
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Center for Constitutional Rights
- Citizens United For Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE)
- Civil Liberties Defense Center
- Concerned Letcher Countians
- Detroit Justice Center
- Dream.Org
- Forward Justice
- Helping Ourselves
- Institute to End Mass Incarceration
- Kentuckians for the Commonwealth
- Methodist Action Program
- Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- The Campaign to Fight Toxic Prisons
- The Sentencing Project
- Sierra Club Kentucky Chapter
- Sierra Club Missouri Chapter
- Standing Up For Racial Justice (SURJ)
- Shriver Center on Poverty Law
- Vera Institute of Justice
- VISIONS Inc.
- Voice of the Experienced (VOTE)
- 350.Org.

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[Building Community Not Prisons](#) is a coalition of people who oppose the construction of FCI Letcher and demand better options for the people of Letcher

County and the communities of color that are most impacted by mass incarceration.