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Inmate Rights

Inmate Rights and Prisons

Part 1: Supreme Court decisions

Helling v. McKinney (91-1958), 509 U. S. 25 (1993).

A Nevada state prisoner McKinney filled a suit against prison officials claiming that his uncontrolled exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) from his cellmates violated the Eighth Amendment. He argued that the second hand smoke from some of his cellmates especially one who smoked five packs a day presented unreasonable risk to his health, therefore subjecting him to cruel punishment (Supreme Court Media 2014). At the time, the Eighth Amendment “ deliberate indifference” only applied to current medical conditions and not future as the plaintiff argued.

The magistrate judgment ruled against him claiming that he did not have an Eighth Amendment right to a smoke free zone. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal overturned this ruling maintaining that he should have been given another opportunity to prove that the smoke levels were sufficient to pose unreasonable danger to his health in the future and therefore he was entitled to a relief. The court came to this ruling under the consideration of the Wilson v. Seiter, 501 U. S. 294, regarding the failure of a prisoner’s medical needs to be attended (Supreme Court Media 2014).

Part 2: Sheridan federal correctional institution

However, the facility has had some incidences regarding crime and arrest over its two-decade existence. In 2007, thirteen people including a warden were charged with robbery and other drug related charges relating to the

prison. In addition, on March 2012, Hall, a twenty four year old inmate died at the facility prompting the arrest of thirty alleged gang members said to be related to his death (Boiter 2013). However, the coroner's office determined his death to be a result of suicide.

Overall, the state of prisons needs to change in this country and in the whole world as well. Good location of prisons promotes better reforms in inmates therefore reducing the chances that these prisoners, when released, will engage in other criminal activities.

References

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Supreme Court Media. (2014). The oyez project at IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law: Helling v. McKinney. Retrieved from: http://www.oyez.org/cases/1990-1999/1992/1992_91_1958/