

2018 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 133

BY REPRESENTATIVE SMITH

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association to ensure that video phones are available in all state and parish facilities.

WHEREAS, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 addresses the needs of people with disabilities and prohibits discrimination in employment, public services, and public accommodations; and

WHEREAS, Title IV of the ADA of 1990 mandated a nationwide system of telecommunications relay services to make the telephone network accessible to people who are deaf and hard of hearing; and

WHEREAS, according to United States Bureau of Justice statistics, in 2012, more than six percent of state and federal inmates reported having a hearing disability; and

WHEREAS, inmates with disabilities are at risk for mistreatment by guards and other correctional employees; and

WHEREAS, the ability to call home is important for every inmate, but it is especially important for deaf and hard of hearing inmates because they are often surrounded by people who do not know American Sign Language; and

WHEREAS, video phones are devices that assist deaf and hard of hearing people in communicating with each other over the phone, or with other people through a sign language interpreter; and

WHEREAS, the technology provided to deaf and hard of hearing people in most U.S. prisons is a teletypewriter, a machine developed in the 1960s that requires users to type messages; however, this technology is outdated and many deaf and hard of hearing inmates are unable to communicate with family members and loved ones; and

WHEREAS, inmates who are able to keep in touch with their families and loved ones are less likely to commit more crimes; and

WHEREAS, video phones in all state and parish facilities would ensure deaf and hard of hearing inmates are not isolated from communicating with others.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association to ensure that video phones are available in state and parish facilities for deaf and hard of hearing inmates.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that suitable copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES