

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 492

By Yager

A RESOLUTION relative to contraband cell phones in prisons.

WHEREAS, contraband cell phones in prisons are a major concern for public safety; and

WHEREAS, the possession and use of contraband cell phones in correctional facilities across the country continue to pose safety risks to the public, correctional staff, and inmates.

Although many devices are intercepted, some make it through to inmates; and

WHEREAS, on a daily basis, contraband cell phones are used nationwide by inmates to plan attacks and intimidate victims, witnesses, and correctional staff. In addition, they are used to promote the distribution of controlled substances and weapons, further criminal enterprises, and engage in gang activity. In many states, including Tennessee, inmate use of contraband cell phones has even cost lives; and

WHEREAS, given the growing public safety concerns, with more cell phones being seized each year, this is an issue of critical importance that requires solutions sooner rather than later, as the proliferation of contraband wireless devices in prisons has potentially devastating implications for public safety; and

WHEREAS, there are some members in the United States Congress who would like to impose a solution directed by Congressional mandate. Such Congressional action should be done only as a last resort; the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and cellular providers have the necessary technical experience to address problems that corrections officials, rather than Congress, can best describe, due to their firsthand, practical knowledge. It is our hope that through such a collaborative approach, a mutually agreeable solution can be reached; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCURRING, that we hereby urge the Federal Communications Commission, members of the major cellular providers, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to take a proactive and collaborative approach, in conjunction with correctional officials nationwide, to effectively disrupt the use of contraband wireless communication devices obtained by inmates.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we hereby urge the major cellular providers to negotiate in good faith in light of this particular and specific threat to public safety.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that appropriately enrolled copies of this resolution be transmitted to the commissioner of the Department of Correction, the members of the Tennessee congressional delegation, Chairman Ajit Pai of the Federal Communications Commission, and the CTIA (formerly Cellular Telecommunications and Wireless Association).