

Abstract

Prison privatization is a hotly debated topic in the United States that has its place in the political agendas of both political parties and generates opinion by various public interest groups. United States has the biggest prison population in the world caused by the harsh sentencing policies that were implemented in the 1980s. California has had the largest criminal justice system in the nation until it was very recently surpassed by Texas. The state of California has been fighting with the overcrowding crisis for three decades. It began contracting out with private prison companies for the management of its prisons in hope it would ease the situation in state prison system that operated at double of its designed capacity. This thesis is a case study that concerns itself with the prison privatization in the state of California. The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate whether contracting with private prisons helped California to solve its overcrowding crisis and whether privately-run prison are a good choice that benefits California society. This goal will be achieved by evaluating existing experience with the private prisons in California's context.