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Prisoners' Rights:

The ACLU's National Prison Project is the only national litigation program on behalf of prisoners. Since 1972, the NPP has represented more than 100,000 men, women and children. The NPP continues to fight unconstitutional conditions and the "lock 'em up" mentality that prevails in the legislatures. Learn more about our project and take action to protect the rights guaranteed to all Americans.

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ACLU of New Mexico Files Lawsuit Over Jail Guard's Sexual Abuse of Female Prisoners (1/25/2006)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
CONTACT: media@aclu.org

ALBUQUERQUE, NM - The American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico today filed claims of sexual abuse and 'cruel and unusual punishment' against a McKinley County detention officer, Brian Orr, on behalf of two female inmates from Wyoming.

"If proper safeguards had been in place, these assaults might never have occurred," said Peter Simonson, Executive Director of the ACLU of New Mexico. "Jails aren't supposed to be pleasant places. However, prisoners are entitled to basic rights, and protection against predatory guards certainly is one of them."

During 2003, Sheila Black and Cristy Herden were incarcerated at the McKinley County jail pursuant to a housing contract between McKinley County and the Wyoming Department of Corrections to relieve overcrowding in Wyoming's main prison for women. Orr repeatedly sexually assaulted the two women and photographed them in the nude, causing the women physical injury and severe psychological and emotional distress, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit also accuses the jail's acting warden, Gilbert Lewis, the board of McKinley County commissioners, and the company that managed the jail, Management and Training Corporation, of negligence and failure to properly train and supervise Orr.

New Mexico ACLU attorneys Kari Morrissey, Phil Davis, and George Bach are litigating the case in collaboration with Stephen Pevar, Senior Staff Counsel for the national ACLU.

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