



Florida expanding faith-based prisons

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Advocates for the separation of church and state say they're closely watching Florida's expansion of non-denominational faith-based prisons.

While 21 other states have faith-based dormitories, Florida is the only one with entire prisons focused on faith and character, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported Monday.

Glade Correctional in Palm Beach County this week becomes the fifth faith-based prison in Florida under a program begun in 2003, said Kathy Connor, a state corrections spokeswoman.

Constitutional issues arise, however, when prisons start linking where inmates live to religious programs, said Alex Luchenitser, a lawyer with Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

"The question is, 'Are inmates being given incentives to enroll in a prison with a religious environment,'" Luchenitser asked.

Nearly 10,000 Florida inmates are on a waiting list for the prisons. Those accepted must have a record of good behavior and commit to programs run by volunteers at no cost to the state. State workers are not allowed to teach the faith classes, the Sun-Sentinel said.

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