

# WILL: Demands Department of Corrections clarify policy on in-person clergy visits

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Contact:

Collin Roth | WILL Director of Communication  
[collin@will-law.org](mailto:collin@will-law.org) | 414-607-2558

The News: The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) issued a [letter](#) to Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary, Kevin Carr, asking for clarification on reported DOC policies that prevent in-person clergy visits to Wisconsin correctional facilities. The policy violates the constitutional rights of Wisconsin inmates to freely exercise their religion and may result in legal action if corrective action isn't taken.

The Quote: WILL Deputy Counsel, Anthony LoCoco, said, "Wisconsin's Department of Corrections is violating Wisconsin inmates' rights to freely worship and partake in in-person religious services. We expect DOC to rescind this policy due to the numerous ways it violates state and federal constitutional guarantees."

Background: On March 13, 2020, the DOC [announced](#) that, "out of an abundance of caution," in order to "minimize the risk of bringing COVID-19 (Coronavirus) into [its] facilities," "[a]ll visits, including volunteer visits, are temporarily suspended at all Department of Corrections Institutions." With this policy in place Wisconsin inmates have apparently been denied the ability to attend an in-person religious service led by a volunteer minister who shares their faith, or receive a sacrament administered by a volunteer minister such as communion, or even meet one-on-one with a volunteer minister for counseling.

The current DOC policy violates both state and federal statutes, as well as constitutional guarantees of freedom to worship at both the state and federal level. In particular, Wisconsin state law, [Wis. Stat. § 301.33](#) ("Freedom of worship;

religious ministrations.”), provides in part:

1. Subject to reasonable exercise of the privilege, members of the clergy of all religious faiths shall have an opportunity, at least once each week, to conduct religious services within the state correctional institutions. Attendance at the services is voluntary.
2. Every inmate shall receive, upon request, religious ministrations and sacraments according to the inmate’s faith.

The DOC has promised to “review” its decision to suspend volunteer entry “on a daily basis.” As of this date, the policy remains in place. WILL’s [letter](#) demands the DOC reassess its policy and inform WILL of any changes by April 8, 2021.

Read More:

- [WILL letter to Secretary Kevin Carr](#), April 1, 2021