

# U.S. Reps. Grothman, Cartwright: Introduce bipartisan bill to address staffing shortage in Bureau of Prisons

Posted on Wednesday, Dec 6, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

(Washington, D.C.) – Congressmen Glenn Grothman (R-WI) and Matt Cartwright (D-PA) have introduced the [BOP Direct-Hire Authority Act](#), a bipartisan bill to alleviate staffing shortages at Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facilities across the country by cutting bureaucratic red tape, which will enhance the safety and security of BOP personnel. This legislation received support from 11 cosponsors, as well as the Council of Prison Locals C-33 (CPL-33), the largest union for BOP employees nationwide.

“We have labor shortages everywhere in this country, but when it comes to hiring correctional officers, it is unnecessarily multiplied by the federal bureaucracy,” **said Grothman.** “I have toured the Federal Correctional Institution in Oxford, Wisconsin, which is part of the Bureau of Prisons, and I often receive feedback from many of its employees. Unfortunately, FCI Oxford is yet another example of the staffing crisis that has devastated BOP facilities and personnel across the country.”

“The crisis of chronic understaffing at the federal Bureau of Prisons undermines the prison system’s ability to foster safety, accountability and rehabilitation” **said Cartwright.** “The existing bureaucratic approach takes too long to hire new corrections officers and needs to be addressed immediately. This commonsense legislation will lead to swifter hiring cycles and better and safer conditions for our correctional officers and inmates.”

“The current staffing levels in BOP institutions have reached dangerously low levels, posing significant risks to both staff and inmates. Insufficient staffing within the

Bureau of Prisons has far-reaching consequences, affecting prison operations, inmate management, and overall institutional functioning. In fact, in FY2023, there were over 7,700 vacancies for Correctional Officers within the BOP,” **said Brandy Moore White, National President of CPL-33.** “We firmly believe that the enactment of the “BOP Direct-Hire Authority Act” into law will play a vital role in ensuring the safety and security of our prison facilities.”

### **Background Information**

For many years, staffing ratios at numerous Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facilities have fallen below safe or sustainable levels, posing increased risks to the safety and well-being of both BOP personnel and inmates. The lack of manpower also affects personnel morale and retention. Shane Fausey, National President of the Council of Prison Locals, highlighted this concern during his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2022 by reporting that **staffing at BOP has fallen from 43,369 employees in January of 2016 to 35,000 employees in September of 2022.**

One of the biggest issues that affects the BOP’s ability to hire personnel in a timely manner are requirements by the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Currently, applicants to BOP must be processed through OPM before the applications are made available to individual BOP facilities for potential hire. This cumbersome process takes a minimum of 105 days, but often results in a lag of six months from the time a position is posted until it is filled.

A straightforward and simple solution to tackle this issue is to provide individual BOP facilities with direct-hire authority for all vacant positions throughout the agency, at least until staffing ratios increase to acceptable levels. This streamlined approach aims to expedite the hiring process, ensuring that critical positions are filled promptly and efficiently.

The *BOP Direct-Hire Authority Act* would provide direct-hire authority for all BOP facilities until each facility reaches a level of 96 percent staffed and is supported by Council of Prison Locals C-33 (CPL33), the largest union for BOP employees nationwide.

Grothman and Cartwright are joined by Representatives Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Larry Bucshon (R-IN), Ralph Norman (R-SC), David Trone (D-MD) Randy Weber (R-TX), Bill Johnson (R-OH), Clay Higgins (R-LA), Pete Stauber (R-MN), Kelly Armstrong (R-ND),

Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ), and Beth Van Duyne (R-TX).

[Click here for the full text of the bill.](#)