Opinion

Congress Sets the Pay Rates For Migrant Prisoner Work

The dollar/day rate set by Congress for work performed by those in custody under immigration laws was in an appropriations act that expired in 1979.

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“Private Prisons Are Sued Over Work Programs for Migrants” (U.S. News, July 23) about lawsuits against Geo Group Inc. and CoreCivic Inc. alleging forced labor, unjust enrichment and minimum-wage law violations omitted crucial information. First, the dollar/day rate set by Congress for work performed by those in custody under immigration laws was in an appropriations act that expired in 1979. Second, in addition to the district court and Tenth Circuit Appellate Court finding legal merit to the allegations of forced labor and unjust enrichment, a federal judge in Washington (a Reagan appointee) and two federal judges in California independently not only denied Geo’s and CoreCivic’s motions to dismiss on these charges, but also greenlighted the charges alleging violations of minimum-wage laws. None of the seven lawsuits filed against the private prison firms on behalf of migrants and U.S. citizens in their custody have been dismissed.

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