

### Katten Partners with ACLU in Defending Constitutional Rights of Prisoners Incarcerated at Louisiana Prison Impacted by Coronavirus Outbreak

April 7, 2020

Katten, along with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Louisiana, sued Warden Rodney Myers and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Director Michael Carvajal on behalf of incarcerated people at the Oakdale Federal Detention Centers in Oakdale, Louisiana, seeking the release of "people who are incarcerated and at high risk for serious illness or death in the event of COVID-19 infection due to age and/or underlying medical conditions," according to a press release issued by the ACLU on April 6.

Katten attorneys involved in the lawsuit included Chicago Litigation partner David Luger, Financial Markets Litigation and Enforcement associate Hannah Koesterer, and Dallas White Collar and Internal Investigations associate Ryan Meyer. A recent article in *Politico*, which discussed the challenges the coronavirus is creating for prisons nationwide, quoted David about his thoughts on the dire situation at the Oakdale Federal Detention Centers.

"The only way to defend Oakdale inmates' constitutional rights and protect the community at large is through immediate and decisive action, including releasing medically vulnerable inmates without further delay," David said.

Louisiana has one of the largest COVID-19 outbreaks and the fastest growth rate for cases across the country. Since the beginning of the pandemic, five Oakdale inmates have died from COVID-19. To try to adjust the federal criminal justice system in the wake of the virus, United States Attorney General William Barr has encouraged top federal prosecutors to consider the risks associated with increasing prison populations and to release, issue bail, or place in home confinement defendants who are pending trial.

Barr has also called for reducing the number of people in Oakdale prison. Katten and the ACLU's lawsuit, however, argues that Barr's directive is too slow, as the five deaths at the prison occurred after he first issued the call.

According to public health experts, physicians, and medical students, overcrowded prisons and jails pose a danger to public health during the COVID-19 pandemic, threatening not only the health of the incarcerated, but also prison staff and the communities surrounding the prisons.

Read, "[Barr says bail decisions should consider virus risks](#)," in its entirety.

To read the ACLU's press release, click [here](#). Read other media coverage regarding the lawsuit and Katten's involvement in [KATC News](#), [KPLC News](#), [BRProud.com](#), and [News Break](#).

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## CONTACTS

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