



The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker and Leaders:

We, the undersigned Attorneys General, as the chief legal and law enforcement officers of our states, write in support of H.R. 2350 and Senate companion S. 1137. This legislation will address one of the most critical threats to our correctional system and public safety: the proliferation of contraband cell phones in our nation's prisons. Our bipartisan coalition recognizes this bill as a vital public safety measure that would protect the people of our respective States.

The problem of contraband cell phones in prisons remains severe and continues to escalate.¹ Despite intensive security measures and the dedicated efforts of our corrections officers, inmates continue to obtain and use cell phones to direct criminal enterprises from within prison walls as a matter of course. These aren't merely communication devices—they are tools that enable incarcerated individuals to conspire and commit crimes that grievously wound our people and our communities.

In Tennessee and across the nation, investigations consistently reveal inmates using contraband phones to coordinate with external criminal networks, resulting in acts of violence

¹ A survey of 20 state corrections departments reported 25,840 contraband cell phone recoveries in 2020 alone. See *The Scope, Severity, and Interdiction of Contraband Cell Phones in Correctional Facilities*, The Urban Institute, available at https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/The_Scope_Severity_and_Interdiction_of_Contraband_Cell_Phones_in_Correctional_Facilities.pdf.

and the distribution of dangerous narcotics in our communities. This pattern repeats itself throughout the United States, with inmates leveraging these devices to:

- Direct drug trafficking operations with unprecedented efficiency;
- Orchestrate violent crimes both inside and outside correctional facilities;
- Execute complex fraud schemes targeting vulnerable citizens;
- Intimidate witnesses and threaten victims' families;
- Coordinate escape attempts that put our law enforcement officers at risk.

Indeed, in North Carolina, one violent gang leader targeted a local prosecutor and her family using a contraband cell phone smuggled into prison.² From his prison cell, using the contraband cell phone, the gang leader masterminded a plan and directed subordinate gang members to kidnap and kill the prosecutor's father—a plan that was thankfully thwarted due to extraordinary efforts by law enforcement.

Current federal law severely restricts our ability to implement effective countermeasures.³ While we have access to some technological solutions, we cannot deploy the most effective tool available—cell phone jamming systems—which leaves our prisons vulnerable and our communities at risk.

H.R. 2350 and S. 1137, introduced by Tennessee Congressman and former United States Attorney David Kustoff and Arkansas Senator and former Army Captain Tom Cotton respectively, would grant States the authority to implement cell phone jamming systems in correctional facilities. This legislation represents a carefully considered approach to addressing this persistent threat while ensuring appropriate oversight and safeguards.

Each day that passes without this authority represents another opportunity for incarcerated criminals to extend their reach beyond prison walls. While we recognize the complexity of this issue and the need to consider various stakeholder interests, the safety of our

² See *Gang leader gets life sentence for kidnapping Wake prosecutor's father*, AP News, available at <https://apnews.com/article/kidnapping-32fd3dd13798724134f7f84dcbf43bfd> (last visited February 21, 2025).

³ See, e.g., *Jammer Enforcement*, Federal Communications Commission; available at www.fcc.gov/general/jammer-enforcement (last visited Jan. 21, 2025) ("Federal law prohibits the operation, marketing, or sale of any type of jamming equipment that interferes with authorized radio communications, including cellular and Personal Communication Services."); *Tennessee Congressman Pushes for Cell Phone Signal Jammers in Prisons*, WKRN; available at www.wkrn.com/news/tennessee-news/tn-congressman-pushes-for-cell-phone-signal-jammers-in-prisons/#:~:text=Jamming%20machines%20block%20cell%20phone,before%20cell%20phones%20were%20invented. (last visited Jan. 21, 2025) (Citing the federal prohibition on cell phone jamming under the Federal Communications Act of 1934).

communities must be paramount. Representative Kustoff’s measure provides a narrow grant of authority to States to jam certain signals in limited areas within prisons and jails using equipment that doesn’t interfere with emergency signals, such as 9-1-1.

This is not a partisan issue—it is a matter of public safety that affects every state and community. Our States need this authority to effectively manage our correctional facilities and protect our citizens. We stand ready to work with you to achieve that urgent goal. We respectfully urge you to pass H.R. 2350 and S. 1137 this year.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Skrmetti
Tennessee Attorney General



Christopher M. Carr
Georgia Attorney General



Jeff Jackson
North Carolina Attorney General



Gordon C. Rhea
U.S. Virgin Islands Attorney General



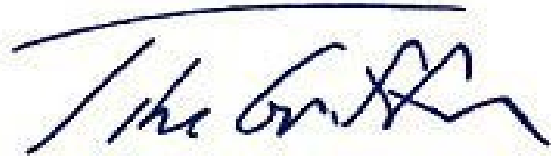
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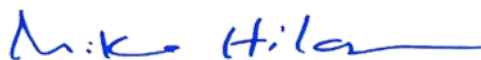
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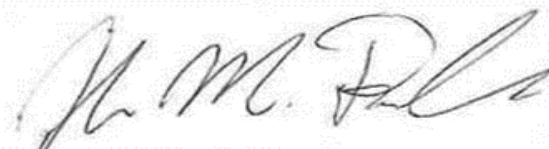
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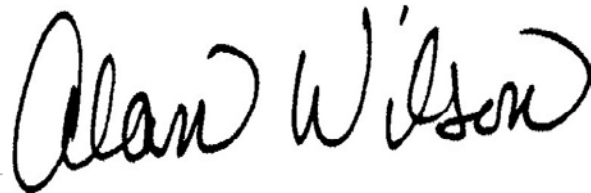
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