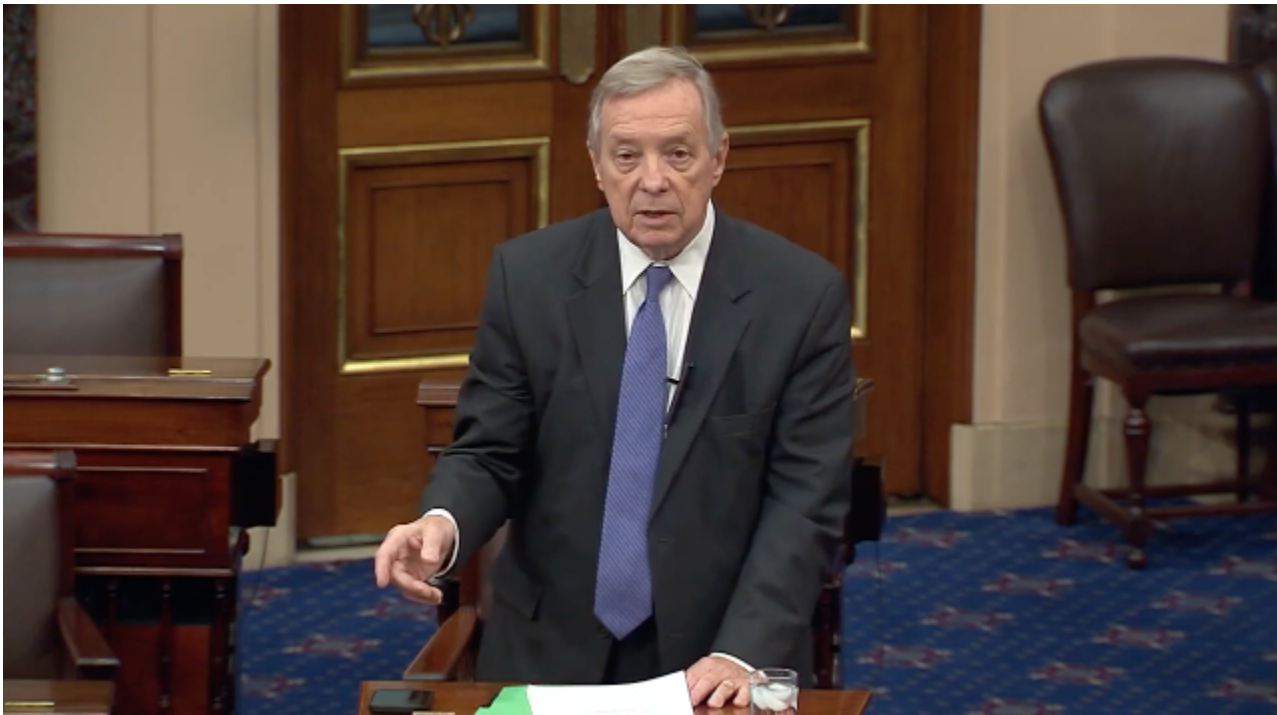


# **Durbin Calls For Abolition Of Special Management Unit, Continued Reforms To Prevent Abuse At USP Thomson**

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BLOOMINGTON – Today, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, released the following statement regarding new reports by [The Marshall Project and NPR](#), as well as [Washington Lawyers' Committee](#), of abuse at USP Thomson:

“Throughout my congressional career, I’ve sought to address injustices facing incarcerated people and their families. Last summer, I was deeply disturbed by reports of abuses at USP Thomson. I called for an investigation, which the Justice Department Inspector General agreed to undertake. The deeply disturbing allegations detailed in

today's reports emphasize the need to expedite this investigation and refer any crimes that may have been committed to the Justice Department for prosecution. Anyone who violated the civil rights of individuals incarcerated at Thomson should be held accountable.

“I strongly supported the BOP Director's decision to remove the Special Management Unit, or SMU, designation from Thomson. Thomson is a safer prison and BOP would be a safer system – for both incarcerated people and staff – without the SMU. That's why I am urging BOP to abolish the SMU. I will also continue to press BOP to make sure Thomson reaches its full potential as a safe and secure facility with a focus on rehabilitation and entry.

“I will continue my effort to reduce the use of restricted housing throughout BOP, and I plan to question Director Peters about this issue when I hold another BOP oversight hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee this fall.”

Following disturbing reports in June 2022 that detailed the deaths of seven incarcerated men and serious abuses by staff at USP Thomson, Senators Durbin and Duckworth and Representative Bustos [called](#) for an immediate federal investigation in a letter to Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General (IG) Michael Horowitz. The following week, the lawmakers [announced](#) that the IG had opened such an investigation.

In March 2023, Durbin [applauded](#) the decision by DOJ and BOP to temporarily convert United States Penitentiary (USP) Thomson into a low-security prison and enhance training for staff. This followed BOP moving all remaining individuals in the Special Management Unit (SMU) and Reintegration Unit (RU) from Thomson in February 2023.

Durbin has continued his BOP oversight efforts – including by [holding](#) a BOP oversight hearing in September 2022 – to press on oversight of BOP facilities, including USP Thomson. Releases are available on Durbin's meetings with BOP Director Peters in [June 2023](#), [February 2023](#), [December 2022](#), and [August 2022](#).

Since becoming chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee in January 2021, Durbin has prioritized oversight of BOP facilities. Durbin [called](#) for a new, reform-minded Director to replace former BOP Director Carvajal back in November 2021, following an [Associated Press report](#) that found that BOP is a “hotbed of abuse, graft and corruption, and has turned a blind eye to employees accused of misconduct.” Carvajal's resignation was [announced](#) less than two months later, and Peters was later [announced](#) as Director in July 2022.