**Need ideas for letters to send to your Political Officials. Below are sample letters from family members and TPCA leadership. You can edit these to make them your own or just print, sign and mail. You can also use the following link for a letter that will go directly to you Political officials, just enter our information, you can modify the letter if you would like to or just sign and click send.** <https://secure.everyaction.com/D1hKe_kLiUGwub1O9Xnb7A2>

**Example Letter #1**

Your Name

Address

Phone #

Email

Dear,\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

My name is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I am a constituent in your assigned district. I am reaching out as a sister of an inmate and concerned human being bringing to your attention the intolerable conditions and inhumane treatment inside TDCJ that affects both staff and incarcerated individuals. If I may, please allow me to direct focus on the unacceptable environment in which staff and inmates are exposed to extreme hot/cold temperatures in summertime & winter. This may come as a surprise to you, as there is very little public awareness, regarding the lack of air conditioning and improper ventilation in the outdated buildings directed and operated by TDCJ. As residents of Texas we all know that summertime means scorching heat and humidity. We manage to survive thanks to air conditioning or an all-time favorite of cooling off in one of our many well-known Texas lakes. However, there is no escape or relief to our fellow previous community residents that are now locked up and forgotten inmates. This of course is a topic of great debate where bias reasoning can be hard to reach an agreement on. Allow me to point out facts backed up with evidence obtained from TDCJ documented reports retrieved via FOIA public access information.

* Outside high temperatures normal to Texas 110°F, now consider being housed in a concrete building with metal roofing, add humidity, and no or inappropriate ventilation
* Record high temperatures inside TDCJ on July 19, 2011 reached 149°F in Hutchins Unit
* Exposure to high temperature 105°F risks heat exhaustion or heat stroke which can cause irreversible damage to brain, heart, kidneys, and muscle function as consequence leaving long-term medical care increasing medical cost for staff and inmates
* Suicide rates significantly increase during warmer months
* Exposure to excessive heat often leads to aggression in both staff and inmates. When atmospheric temperatures rise, so does body temperature making it difficult to deal with stressful situations
* Thus, causing an unsafe environment for both staff and inmates. Aggression in our prison systems is the main leading cause to violence ending in serious injuries to both staff and inmates
* Excessive heat seems to be related to an increase of staff turnover experienced more during summertime. Taking into account staff turnover is already an existing problem which poses a high-security issue
* In July 2018 U.S District Judge Keith P. Ellison in relation to Pack Lawsuit ruled that heat inside the prison was "cruel and unusual punishment" awarding a settlement amount of approximately $7,000,000. A far larger amount paid in the above-mentioned suit than $3,987,000 cost to install air conditioning in this unit
* TDCJ has paid over $12,000,000 in settlements related to extreme heat issues
* TDCJ spent $750,000 to replace its aging swine production plants with 6 new climate-controlled barns

Surely we can conclude from this last mentioned, TDCJ treats pigs better than inmates. I think anyone with human dignity, values, and morals would find such action intolerable and inhumane at the least. Of course, prison is not supposed to be a stay at a luxurious hotel however, nowhere in the Constitution does it state allowance of cruel and unusual punishment nor inhumane conditions and treatment. If not moved to mercy for prisoners, as taxpayers we should be concerned where and what our dime is used for support. As a daughter and sister in Christ, I cannot turn away or keep quiet from the cries of the suffering inmates. In doing so I would be joining and aiding the abominable act against human beings regardless of the actions committed that is not my place to judge and those actions make them less of a human being. If one was to mistreat a dog, by exposing them to the extreme heat that would merit criminal charges for animal cruelty. Then how can it even be possible for human beings to be treated worse than tolerated animal treatment? This significantly affects me so much my heart breaks on a daily basis. For almost 5 years that my brother has been incarcerated. It’s a heavy sorrow to deal with knowing what I know overwhelmed with helplessness as I cannot do anything to help my brother be humanely comfortable. On behalf of inmates and all suffering along with them; mothers, fathers, siblings, spouses, children of inmates I ask that you consider the suffering of Texas citizens, educate yourself on prison conditions, and during session vote for these long-needed changes. I'm asking you to do what is morally and humanely correct for both staff and prisoners. I would also like to have an opportunity to discuss this further at your convenience in-person meeting. Thank you very much for taking the time to read my letter.

Best regards.

**Example Letter #2**

Honorable:

I am \_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am writing this letter is in reference to the inhumane conditions of lack of proper ventilation and temperature control within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Prison Facilities. My husband is currently an inmate within the TDCJ system. Prior to his incarceration, I was oblivious to many of the horrific situations that exist within the TDCJ system. Although I understand that a prison is not designed to be a nice place in general, I did expect that it would at least be humane. The lack of humane treatment of the inmates also impacts their loved ones on the outside, personally, this issue has caused me much grief. For example, every time I get into my hot car on a day that is over 85 degrees, all I do is think about what my husband is suffering and I cry. I cry for the person who gets upset if he forgets his gentlemanly duty of opening a door for me. I can get relief, but he can’t. I cry for all the mothers, fathers, wives, and husbands who suffer along with their incarcerated loved ones. On hot days I try to visit him later in the day just so that he can have the benefit of air conditioning for a short while. That decision often means that I have to wait outside along with other families, in the heat for up to two hours. When he first arrives to visit me his face is often red and he is covered in sweat. When I go to visit my husband I also am moved by the guards who have to stand out in the hot sun with only a fan and a small shack. I see how weary they are.

After researching this topic I have found reports of several deaths, wrongful death lawsuits filed, and complaints from family members and union officials for well over 30 years. I am amazed by the lack of compassion and cruelty that TDCJ has exhibited by refusing to take basic steps to provide humane conditions for the people in their care. It seems reasonable that if TDCJ has money in the budget to replace its aging swine-production facilities with 6 new climate-controlled modular barns, at a cost of $750,000, surely they could treat people better than pigs. I believe (along with others) that this situation of exposing both the officers and prison inmates to dangerously hot temperatures is a blatant violation of their human rights. I further believe that TDCJ is currently violating the U.S. Constitution and international human rights standards by the cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of exposing people to temperature extremes.

In conclusion, my mother had a saying that “two wrongs don’t make a right”. To allow this situation to continue is simple WRONG! I am hoping and praying that this letter disturbs your conscience, as one who is sworn to protect its citizens. This travesty has taken and damaged too many lives and has persisted too long. I am asking you to do what is morally and humanely correct by bringing proper temperature control and ventilation, to both the officers and inmates within the TDCJ Prison Facilities.

***Matthew 25: 44- 45 44"Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' 45"Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'***

Thank you for your attention to this matter!

**Example Letter #3**

Dear

As a constituent of your district and the wife of an incarcerated person. I would like to take a minute of your time to discuss an issue that is of great concern to me. Our prisons here in Texas are without proper heating and cooling systems and the men and women that are incarcerated and the staff that work in these units are living/working in inhumane conditions. I am asking you to support and correct this issue HB88. I would just like to give you a little information regarding these bills and ask for your support.

Problems:

* Both staff and incarcerated people perish every year due to extreme heat in the summer months
* Suicide rates typically increase during the warmer months in our prison systems.
* Excessive heat often leads to aggression in both staff and inmates, causing an unsafe environment for incarcerated people as well as the staff,
* Excessive heat in the units is causing staff turnover to increase during these warmer months.

In some of our units here in Texas, the temperatures can reach as high as 120-140 degrees inside with humidity, these temperatures far exceed the 105-degree temperature where heatstroke can occur. This alone concerns me for both incarcerated people and staff. Heat strokes can directly affect brain, heart, kidney, and muscle function on a long-term basis if not treated in time. These issues can cause long-term medical care to be needed increasing medical costs for incarcerated people and staff.

Aggression rises in prisons across the state during the summer months between incarcerated people and staff. As temperatures rise, we all can become a little hard to deal with. Have you ever been out cutting grass in the middle of August for hours on end and came inside hot and tired and had an argument with a family member over something really small? These men/women who live and work in our prisons are no different. Heat tires people, and increases aggression over small things, this is a danger to both staff and incarcerated people in an already stressful environment. Aggression in our prisons often becomes violent ending in either staff or inmates being seriously injured. By regulating temperatures, we can eliminate some of that for all involved.

Short staffing has been an issue for years in our prison units. And I can understand why. In my younger years, I often worked in manufacturing plants, most of which were cooled by the big box fans that are currently being used inside the prison during the summer months. These fans only move hot air around, they do not cool anything. It was working in those conditions that made me seek other employment. The staff at the prison units are no different. They have to be in full uniform for their full shift, in heat that is well over 100 degrees some days, while they are afforded places to cool off, it’s only for a short time and then right back into that heat. And their job is already stressful in itself. Adding more to it is enough to cause staff to seek other opportunities.

In closing, I would like to ask that you consider supporting these bills in this session. These are important issues that need to be addressed for human safety. All lives matter and the men/women that live in work in these prisons across our state deserve humane working and living conditions.

Please reach out to me if you have further questions, and I would love to speak with you concerning these issues.

**Example Letter #4**

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express my concern about the extreme heat inside TDCJ. We all know Texas is hot and that humidity and inadequate ventilation can make temperatures inside the prisons easily reach over 125 degrees. It should go without saying that this is inhumane. In fact, US District Judge Keith P. Ellison ruled in July 2018 that heat inside prison was “cruel and unusual punishment” related to the Pack Lawsuit. The settlement of $7,000,000 in this suit was far higher than the $3,987,000 it cost to install air conditioning in this unit. And that was just ONE lawsuit that the state has settled. There has been over $12,000,000 in settlements.

My nephew is in one of these overheated prisons. Last summer, during an already hard time with Covid restrictions and frequent lockdowns, he begged and pleaded, for just a cup of cold water. His cries went unheard. He was allowed a short call the next day when he described this to me. He said the guards denied his and others’ request for hours and hours, it was only when the Major happened to walk that wing, did they start to pass out the water. Prison is not easy. And most would say it’s not meant to be, but to beg and cry out for hours for just a simple cup of cold water is beyond punishment.

I am asking for your support, on behalf of humanity and Christian values. I am asking work towards that finally correct this problem. I look forward to hearing back from you. I would love to have a call, in-person, or zoom meeting to discuss this further.

**Example Letter #5**

[Date]

[Your Name]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

[Email ID] / [Phone Number]

To,

The Honorable [Insert Name]

RE: Heat inside Texas Prisons

Dear Representative [Insert Name],

My name is [First Name Last Name], your constituent, and am writing in regards to the heat conditions inside the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and the extreme weather conditions many men and women currently incarcerated have to endure while there. On hot summer days my husband would rather stay where he is than go to what’s referred to the “chow hall” because, how he explains it, it feels like a furnace. Imagine sitting in your car while it is off on a hot summer day with only a fan blowing hot air. Aggression also rises during the hottest months of the year. This is extremely inhumane and dangerous not just to those incarcerated but to TDCJ employees also.

TDCJ has tried to offset the heat by providing ice cold water containers but this is largely dependent on when and if the correctional officer has time to refill the container. By TDCJ being required to keep more humane temperatures and install AC units they would also be saving taxpayer dollars in the long run by avoiding hefty lawsuits that have resulted after heat-related deaths.

Please help us help these men and women. During session I urge you to consider supporting bills that enforce humane temperature standards within the Texas Prisons. Texas Jails are already complying with these standards and I would like TDCJ to do the same. I greatly appreciate you reading this [letter/email] and hope to hear back from you soon.

Best Regards,

[First Name Last Name]

**Example Letter #6**

Dear [Decision Maker],

I’m writing to urge you to support the Humane Temperatures and require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to maintain the temperature of its facilities between 65 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

Incarcerated individuals in TDCJ prison facilities endure dangerously high temperatures up to 149°F without adequate ventilation or air conditioning. Can you imagine spending days and nights on end in the heat and humidity, having to lay on a wet floor hoping for some level of reprieve, or wearing a heavy vest and security equipment with only a warm bottle of water for hours?

Over the past 30 years, despite millions of dollars spent on lawsuits, several deaths, a plethora of media reports, and complaints from families and union officials, the state of Texas has refused to rectify this unconstitutional and inhumane treatment.

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/06/18/air-conditioning/#:~:text=In%20Texas%2C%20a%20state%20that,medication%20for%20high%20blood%20pressure>.

These unbearable heat conditions pose serious risks to the health and safety of incarcerated individuals and staff and undermine the rehabilitative purpose of prison. Please work towards ensuring that TDCJ prison facilities have proper air ventilation and that incarcerated individuals are no longer exposed to heat levels that endanger their lives.

Texas jails already adhere to a temperature standard of 65 to 85 degrees. TDCJ recently installed climate-controlled barns for its’ swine production facilities (<https://www.houstonpress.com/news/tdcj-defends-no-air-conditioning-in-unbearably-hot-prisons-in-federal-court-9567996>).