



# NEWS RELEASE

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## MDOC Commissioner Calls Lawsuit Frivolous And Will Ask For Sanctions

Jackson—Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) Commissioner Robert L. Johnson today announced the department would be asking the U.S. District Court in the Northern District of Mississippi to cite sanctions against inmate attorney Ron Welch for filing frivolous lawsuits against the state. Commissioner Johnson noted the most recent filing by Welch is way outside of Gates.

“We are the only entity in the state of Mississippi that not only provides an annual paycheck to the attorney that sues us, the MDOC has paid Welch more than \$600,000 in the last five years for suits that are often frivolous,” said Commissioner Johnson. “Because he filed this under Gates there is the assumption that we will be asked to pay for this court action. These consistent court challenges are irrelevant to Gates and we will ask the courts to cite Welch for the abuse. If Welch wants to bring suit over the Governor’s veto, he should do so at his own expense and time, not MDOC’s.”

MDOC has paid Welch the following sums over the last five years:

1998	-	\$ 74,168
1999	-	\$131,344
2000	-	\$199,865
2001	-	\$155,728
2002	-	<u>\$116,963</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$678,068</b>

These payments to Welch by MDOC are pursuant to a court order.

“The closure of the Delta Correctional Facility will not impede compliance with Gates v. Collier, which the Mississippi Department of Corrections has been in compliance with for over two years now,” said Commissioner Johnson. “That is what makes this latest lawsuit more galling.”

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