



Congresswoman
VALERIE P. FOUSHEE
REPRESENTING NORTH CAROLINA'S 4TH DISTRICT

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News

JULY 24, 2026

REP. FOUSHEE INTRODUCES BILL TO END PRICE GOUGING IN FEDERAL PRISON COMMISSARIES

WASHINGTON, DC (July 24, 2026) — Yesterday, **Congresswoman Valerie Foushee (NC-04)** introduced the Stop Prison Price Gouging Act of 2026, legislation to prevent federal prison commissaries from charging prices above fair market value, strengthen oversight of Bureau of Prisons (BOP) contracts, and protect incarcerated people and their families from unfair costs.

The bill would require the Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons to set commissary prices at no more than the fair market value of each item in the state where the facility is located. By establishing a clear definition of fair market value and excluding prices from correctional institutions and other captive markets, the legislation would ensure incarcerated people are not charged inflated prices for basic necessities. This also comes on the back of [reports](#) that the Trump Administration hopes to privatize food service, commissary, and health care across the BOP.

“People in federal custody should not be charged more for basic necessities simply because they have no other place to buy them,” **said Congresswoman Foushee.**

“Inflated commissary prices do not just affect incarcerated people—they also place a burden on the families who sacrifice to help their loved ones afford everyday essentials. The Stop Prison Price Gouging Act establishes a clear, commonsense standard for fair pricing, strengthens transparency and accountability, and ensures that federal prison commissaires are not used as a source of unfair profit from a captive market.”

The legislation would require the Bureau of Prisons to use competitive bidding when awarding commissary

contracts and prohibit contracts that include revenue-sharing arrangements. It will also require the Bureau of Prisons to review commissary prices every month, submit an annual report to Congress detailing available goods, prices, and contracts at each facility, and undergo annual audits by the Government Accountability Office to ensure compliance with the bill's fair-pricing requirements.

The Stop Prison Price Gouging Act of 2026 is endorsed by Brennan Center for Justice, FAMM, the Prison Policy Initiative, and the Vera Institute of Justice.

"At a prison commissary, basic necessities like soap and toothpaste should be sold at market value, not at a markup. Unfortunately, that's not always the case in federal prison. Overcharging for things like reading glasses hurts the people who are incarcerated and, in many cases, their families who fund commissary accounts. It's time to make it more affordable for the people behind bars to take care of themselves. This bill is about human dignity, and Congress should pass it into law," **said JC Hendrickson, senior policy strategist in the justice program at the Brennan Center for Justice.**

"Incarcerated people and their families spend billions of dollars every year on commissary purchases. FAMM is proud to endorse the Stop Prison Price Gouging Act because no one should be exploited by inflated prices for basic needs such as toiletries and phone calls," **said Kevin Hagan, Esq., Federal Legislative Affairs Director with FAMM (formerly Families Against Mandatory Minimums).**

"Prison Policy Initiative is happy to support the Stop Prison Price Gouging Act. People in federal prisons may earn as little as \$0.12 an hour from their work assignments and are often among the poorest in the country before their incarceration. Nevertheless, they are routinely forced to pay far more for an item in prison than they would in the community. Families are left to shoulder the burden, spending an average of \$4200 each year to support their loved ones during incarceration. This bill recognizes the economic burdens incarcerated people and their families often face and seeks to address them by providing much-needed guardrails for prison contracts and by ensuring that prices in prison reflect fair market value," **said Sarah Staudt, Director of Advocacy and Policy at Prison Policy Initiative.**

"No one should be forced to pay inflated prices for basic necessities simply because they are incarcerated. When commissary prices are too high, the burden falls not only on incarcerated people but also on the families who often sacrifice to help their loved ones afford everyday essentials. This legislation is an important step toward

ensuring that federal prison commissary prices are fair, transparent, and free from profiteering," **said Aiden Cotter, Director of Federal Advocacy, Vera Institute of Justice and Vera Action.**

The full text of the bill can be found [here](#).