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**LAWSUIT FILED AGAINST LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS
OVER CIVIL RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL ABUSES;
SUMMER HEAT IN LOUISIANA CREATES UNSAFE AND UNLIVABLE CONDITIONS**

NEW ORLEANS – The weather forecast for Angola, Louisiana, is predicted to hit 95 degrees this week. At Angola prison, the effective temperatures on death row will be significantly hotter.

The Promise of Justice Initiative (PJI) and Bird, Marella, Boxer, Wolpert, Nessim, Dooks & Lincenberg, P.C. (Bird Marella) filed a complaint against the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections alleging violations of the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the Eight Amendment. In challenging the intense heat on Louisiana's death row, the complaint alleges a heat indexes as high as 195 degrees Fahrenheit during the humid Louisiana summer.

Death row inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola are housed in cinderblock cells 23 hours per day with little, if any, ventilation. Temperature logs from the prison, when cross-referenced with relative humidity measures from the National Weather Service, indicate that in the summer of 2012 the heat index inside death row reached as high as 172 degrees, and as high as 195 degrees in 2011. Over multiple several-day stretches, the heat index remained in the so-called Extreme Danger Zone. Prisoners sleep on the floor in their underwear, braving fire ant bites, in order to be a few degrees cooler than they would be on their cots, and still sweat profusely through the night. Extreme heat exposure causes symptoms of heat stress, exacerbates high-risk conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes, and puts the plaintiffs at serious risk of heat stroke which can cause death and permanent neurological damage. Plaintiffs argue that these conditions violate the Eight Amendment, which requires that prisoners be given reasonably safe accommodation.

This litigation follows an action by the Advocacy Center, who last summer filed a suit against the prison to gain access to investigate conditions on death row. Inmates' administrative requests for even the slightest relief from the heat have been repeatedly rejected.

“The conditions on death row at Angola are horrifying, and a fundamental violation of Constitutional protections,” said Mercedes Montagnes, PJI lawyer and lead attorney on the lawsuit. “There is no question that

the lack of climate control puts these men in a dangerous situation. Because they are confined to these block cells, their ability to take any step to maintain their health is severely limited.”

Work for the lawsuit began after the plaintiffs, three inmates on death row, voiced their concerns to their attorneys. All of the temperature data used by PJI in calculating the heat indexes was provided by the State to the attorneys through a public records request under state law. Lawyers reached out to the Prison in hopes of remedying the situation, but administrators were not willing to work out a compromise, stating that there was no cause for concern. The legal team is hopeful that the parties can work to resolve the issues alleged in the complaint before the worst days of the Louisiana summer arrive. “We don’t expect prisons to be comfortable, but anyone who looked at these numbers or heard about the conditions would find them shocking, beyond what’s conscionable,” said Nilay Vora, Associate at Bird Marella. “The heat of summer is setting in, and temperatures on death row are again starting to rise to dangerous levels. Immediate action is necessary to prevent these inhumane and life-threatening conditions.”

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The Promise of Justice Initiative (PJI) is a private, non-profit organization that advocates for criminal justice reform and abolition of the death penalty on behalf of indigent defendants and prisoners who seek fair and equal treatment under the law.

Bird, Marella, Boxer, Wolpert, Nessim, Drooks & Lincenberg, P.C. (Bird Marella) is a Los Angeles based law firm acting as co-counsel with PJI.