

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Professor Armstrong  
**From:** John Paul Perez  
**Date:** 20 April 2026  
**Re:** Oversight, Transparency, and Conditions at Webster Parish Jail

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### I. Introduction

This memorandum analyzes the operations, oversight, and transparency of the Webster Parish Jail in Webster Parish, Louisiana. The analysis focuses on institutional accountability, availability of public information, and potential constitutional implications of limited oversight. The memo relies on publicly available sources and the facility's failure to respond to a Louisiana Public Records Act ("PRA") request submitted as part of a prior assignment. That non-response is itself probative of deficiencies in transparency and statutory compliance.

### II. Deaths in Custody

Publicly available information regarding deaths at Webster Parish Jail is extremely limited. This absence is significant. While federal law previously required reporting under the Death in Custody Reporting Act, local compliance and public accessibility remain inconsistent, particularly in smaller or rural jurisdictions.

According to publicly available sources, there were five deaths between 2015 and 2019. However, no singular publicly available source has all deaths that occurred in Webster Parish Jail. For example, one website reports that there were two deaths, one in 2017 and one in 2019.<sup>1</sup> Another website reports that there were three deaths, one in 2015, one in 2017, and one in 2019 and the years that both websites reported deaths, the names were of different people.<sup>2</sup> The fact that these two websites are both reporting deaths that happened while incarcerated in this facility and do not contain any matching names shows that there is a lack of transparency in how many jails operate. Of those five deaths, three were logged as being medically related, one death was ruled a suicide, and the final is simply listed as "other".<sup>3</sup>

The lack of publicly available mortality data inhibits meaningful oversight and raises concerns regarding compliance with constitutional standards. Pretrial individuals, who comprise a substantial portion of local jail populations, are protected under the Fourteenth Amendment from objectively unreasonable conditions of confinement.<sup>4</sup> Without transparency in mortality data, it is difficult to assess whether the facility is meeting its constitutional obligations.

### III. Jail Characteristics

#### A. Capacity, Population, and Demographics

The Webster Parish Jail is operated by the Webster Parish Sheriff's Office and serves as the primary detention facility for the parish. The facility has minimum, medium, and maximum-security classifications and can accommodate approximately one hundred and fifty individuals including those pre-trial, post-conviction, and those awaiting transfer to state facilities.<sup>5</sup> No information could be found on the current population data such as total

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<sup>1</sup> *Webster Parish*, Incarceration Transparency, <https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/la-prison-deaths/webster/> (Apr. 18, 2026).

<sup>2</sup> *Dataset*, LA Deaths Behind Bars, <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.incarcerationtransparency.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2021%2F06%2FDataset-La-Deaths-Behind-Bars-2015-2019-05.2.21-.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK> (Apr. 17, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> Incarceration Transparency, *supra*; LA Deaths Behind Bars, *supra*.

<sup>4</sup> *Kingsley v. Hendrickson*, 576 U.S. 389 (2015).

<sup>5</sup> *Webster Parish Jail*, St. James Parish Clerk of Court, <https://stjamesparishclerkofcourt.com/louisiana/county-jail/webster-parish-jail/> (Apr. 19, 2026)

numbers of individuals housed there or their demographic breakdown. The absence of demographic transparency is particularly concerning given Louisiana's documented racial disparities in incarceration.<sup>6</sup> Without such data, it is difficult to evaluate whether the jail's population reflects broader systemic inequities or whether disparities are being exacerbated at the local level.

## **B. Location and Jurisdiction**

The Webster Parish Jail is located in Webster Parish, Louisiana, a rural jurisdiction in the northwestern region of the state. Their physical address is 410 Martin Street, Minden, LA 71055 and their mailing address is 1455 Bravo Boulevard, PO Box 877, Minden, LA 71055.<sup>7</sup> The jail also has a website with basic information such as location, how to contact individuals housed in the jail, and programming and supportive services.<sup>8</sup> The rural nature of the parish may contribute to reduced media scrutiny and fewer interventions by advocacy organizations. Research consistently shows that rural detention facilities are less likely to be subject to sustained oversight, increasing the risk that unconstitutional conditions may go undetected.

## **C. Leadership**

The jail is overseen by the elected Webster Parish Sheriff, who has primary responsibility for jail administration, staffing, and policy. The current Sheriff is Sheriff Jason Parker, who assumed office in 2020.<sup>9</sup> Sheriff Parker is a registered Republican with law enforcement training that includes Louisiana State Police Training Academy, DEA Drug Task Force; Louisiana State Police, SWAT; DWI Training Officer; and Louisiana State Police K-9 Handler.<sup>10</sup> Webster Parish has one hundred and sixty-seven full-time Deputy Sheriffs and fifteen part-time Deputy Sheriffs.<sup>11</sup> The parish prison warden is Scott Tucker, who has thirty-one years' worth of law enforcement experience in Webster Parish and was appointed by Sheriff Parker in September of 2024.<sup>12</sup>

In Louisiana, sheriffs exercise substantial autonomy over jail operations. Unlike state prison systems, parish jails are not subject to centralized management, which results in significant variability in conditions and accountability across jurisdictions. However, while they have broad oversight, the sheriff will not focus on the day-to-day operations of the jail and instead appoints a warden to overlook those responsibilities to work alongside sheriff deputies and other correctional officers responsible for daily operations.

## **D. Budget and Financing**

Funding for the Webster Parish Jail is derived from a combination of parish funds, state reimbursements, and per diem payments for housing detainees. In an annual audit of the Webster Parish Sheriff by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor, there is no specific reference to budgets or expenditures for the jail, only the larger Bayou Dorcheat Correctional Center (BDCC).<sup>13</sup> However, Webster Parish's proposed 2026 budget allots \$639,300 for "Public Safety/Corrections" from a general fund and \$910,000 from a special revenue fund for a total of \$1,549,300.<sup>14</sup> Louisiana's per diem system has been widely criticized for creating financial incentives to detain individuals longer or at higher rates without corresponding accountability for conditions of confinement.<sup>15</sup> The lack of

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<sup>6</sup> Ashley Nellis, *The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons*, Sent'g Project (2021).

<sup>7</sup> St. James Parish Clerk of Court, *supra*.

<sup>8</sup> *Webster Parish Jail Information*, Webster Parish Jail LA, <https://websterparishjaila.org/> (Apr. 19, 2026).

<sup>9</sup> *Webster Parish*, Louisiana Sheriff's Association, <https://lsa.org/directory/webster-parish/> (Apr. 18, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Tucker's New Path Leads to BDCC*, Webster Parish Journal, <https://websterparishjournal.com/2025/01/29/tuckers-new-path-leads-to-bdcc/> (Jan. 29, 2025).

<sup>13</sup> La. Legis. Auditor, *Webster Parish Sheriff Annual Financial Statements and Audit*, (Jan. 28, 2026).

<sup>14</sup> *2026 Proposed Budget - Webster Parish*, Minden Press Herald, (Oct. 29, 2025).

<sup>15</sup> La. Legis. Auditor, *Local Jail Operations and Funding* (2019).

transparent and readily available financial reporting specific to Webster Parish Jail operations limits the ability to assess whether resources are being allocated in a manner consistent with constitutional requirements.

## **IV. Evidence of Oversight**

### **A. Accreditation**

No publicly available evidence indicates that Webster Parish Jail is accredited by national correctional organizations such as the American Correctional Association (ACA) or the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCCHC). However, it is listed on the Sabine Parish Sheriff's Office's website that the Webster Parish Jail is accredited by the Louisiana Accreditation Correction Commission.<sup>16</sup> Accreditation is voluntary but often serves as a baseline indicator of adherence to nationally recognized standards. The absence of a national accreditation suggests limited external validation of the facility's policies and practices.

### **B. Audits and Investigations**

Publicly available information regarding formal audits of Webster Parish Jail is limited. Potential oversight mechanisms include Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections inspections, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) audits, and Louisiana Legislative Auditor reviews. After extensive research, only two inspections were found to have been done by any of these agencies or groups. One inspection found was a 2023 memo from the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to Sheriff Parker about a Basic Jail Guidelines (BJG) inspection that happened in 2023.<sup>17</sup> The second was a PREA audit from 2019, which is still posted to the Webster Parish Sheriff's Officer Corrections Division website.<sup>18</sup>

The Secretary states in the memo to the sheriff that facility passed their inspection and continued to provide a secure, safe, and stable environment for DOC inmates in their custody.<sup>19</sup> Specifically, the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections' BJJ monitoring report found that the Webster Parish Jail was fully compliant with applicable state standards and maintained a generally safe, secure, and orderly environment for inmates.<sup>20</sup> Inspectors observed that the facility was clean, well-maintained, and properly managed, with adequate sanitation, functioning safety protocols, and appropriate documentation practices, including logs, inspections, and inmate records.<sup>21</sup> Staff were described as professional and cooperative, morale appeared high, and incarcerated individuals' interactions with staff were respectful, with no significant complaints reported.<sup>22</sup> The facility met requirements across key operational areas such as medical access, food service, classification, grievance procedures, and security measures, and no major deficiencies or systemic issues were identified during the inspection.<sup>23</sup> Although minor past issues (such as incomplete drug testing compliance in a prior period) were noted, they did not affect the overall compliance status.<sup>24</sup> Investigators ultimately recommended that the jail remain on routine annual monitoring, indicating continued satisfactory performance.<sup>25</sup> With that recommendation in mind, I searched for other BJJ reports and was

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<sup>16</sup> *Webster Parish Jail, LA Inmate Lookup, Visitation and Mailing Rules, Contacts*, SabineSheriff.com (Feb. 2, 2026), <https://sabinesheriff.com/louisiana/county-jail/webster-parish-jail/>.

<sup>17</sup> La. Dep't of Pub. Safety & Corr., Basic Jail Guidelines Monitoring Report: Webster Parish Jail (Dec. 6, 2023), <https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2023.12.06-Webster-Parish-BJJ-Audit.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Corrections Division, *Webster Parish Sheriff's Off.*, <https://www.webstersheriff.org/corrections-division/> (Apr. 20, 2026).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

not able to find any. The difficulty of being able to find any other accessible audit reports or findings raises concerns about the adequacy of oversight and the transparency of compliance with state and federal standards.

The 2019 PREA audit of the Webster Parish Sheriff's Office facilities provides one of the most substantive forms of external oversight available. However, the audit was for both Webster Parish Jail and BDCC. The audit, conducted by a certified Department of Justice auditor following a site visit in May 2019, ultimately found the facilities to be compliant with PREA standards, with all 43 applicable standards met after a corrective action period.<sup>26</sup> However, the audit identified several significant deficiencies prior to corrective action, including inadequate staff training on PREA procedures, inconsistent inmate education on reporting sexual abuse, gaps in contractor background checks, and limitations on inmate reporting mechanisms, particularly for those in segregation without phone access.<sup>27</sup> The audit also noted structural and operational concerns, including overcrowding and poor conditions in female housing areas, limited mental health services, and privacy issues related to surveillance practices.<sup>28</sup> While these issues were reportedly addressed during the 180-day corrective action period, the findings underscore that PREA compliance was not initially achieved and required substantial remediation.<sup>29</sup> Importantly, because PREA audits are narrowly focused on sexual safety, they do not evaluate broader constitutional conditions of confinement, meaning that compliance does not necessarily indicate overall adequacy of jail conditions.

Beyond these two reports, there is little evidence of consistent parish-level hearings or formal review of jail operations. In practice, parish governing bodies often defer to sheriffs on correctional matters, which can result in limited independent oversight.

### **C. Judicial Intervention**

No recent large-scale federal consent decrees or structural reform litigation specifically targeting Webster Parish Jail were identified through publicly available sources. However, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a federal lawsuit in December of 2024 against the State of Louisiana for a "pattern or practice" of holding individuals past their release dates.<sup>30</sup> This litigation affects many parish jails, including Webster parish, that house state-sentenced individuals. Currently the lawsuit is ongoing, with continuances granted for a variety of reasons such as the inauguration of a new president, counsel for the United States withdrawing for "re-assignment of litigation responsibilities for this action within the United States Department of Justice", Louisiana submitting a motion for abeyance and getting all proceedings halted for three months, with the court continuing to grant similar motions since then.<sup>31</sup> The late 2025 government shutdown also delayed this lawsuit, with the most recent minutes entry for this case saying that there was a telephone conference between the parties and the judge, with another follow-up telephone conference set for May 7<sup>th</sup> this year.<sup>32</sup> The absence of multiple pieces of litigation does not necessarily indicate constitutional compliance. Instead, it may reflect barriers to access to legal representation or limited civil rights enforcement in rural jurisdictions.

## **V. Evidence of Transparency**

### **A. Public Reporting**

There is minimal evidence that the Webster Parish Sheriff's Office itself publishes regular reports or provides detailed public briefings regarding jail operations. However, the Webster Parish Police Jury (WPPJ) holds regular public meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 10:30 a.m. at the Courthouse Annex in Minden, LA.<sup>33</sup> These meetings are live streamed via Webex and include committee reports that may cover public safety funding,

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<sup>26</sup> Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Audit Report, *Webster Parish Sheriff's Office* (Feb. 5, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> *United States v. Louisiana*, No. 3:24-cv-01041-BAJ-RLB (M.D. La. filed Dec. 19, 2024).

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> Webster Parish Police Jury, *Webster Parish Police Jury Home Page*, <https://www.websterparishla.org/index.html> (Apr. 20, 2026).

jail maintenance, and judicial expenditures.<sup>34</sup> The WPPJ is a local government body in Webster Parish, Louisiana that is responsible for law enforcement and public safety.<sup>35</sup> It provides resources and information to the community, including links to parish ordinances and other resources.<sup>36</sup> The jury is composed of elected officials who oversee the police department and ensure the safety and well-being of the residents.<sup>37</sup>

## **B. Data Availability**

Certain public access to jail data, including population statistics, incident reports, or mortality data, is extremely limited. However, the Webster Parish Sheriff's Office Corrections Division website page has links for the general public to access "Inmate Commissary" to order food, hygiene products, and other items for their loved ones, "Video Visitation" and "Inmates Phones" to get into contact with their loved ones, and a "Current Inmate Search" tab to look up where loved ones might be being held.<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting that the "Current Inmate Search" tab does not say where the individual is being held, so there is no way to tell from the search tab if someone is at the jail, BDCC, or another facility in Webster Parish.<sup>39</sup> This is certainly something that should be available to the general public, but the lack of publicly available data such as population statistics, incidents reports, and mortality data significantly restricts public oversight to hold the jail accountable and prevents meaningful evaluation of jail conditions.

## **C. Advocacy and External Review**

There are few instances of sustained reporting or investigation by advocacy organizations specifically focused on Webster Parish Jail. This reflects a broader national trend in which smaller and rural facilities receive less attention despite potentially significant issues. However, there are a few organizations that have published reports in the past that can be found online. One of them is Vera Institute of Justice, which maintains a dedicated data profile for Webster Parish as part of its "Louisiana Locked Up" initiative.<sup>40</sup> Their reporting is only as recent as 2021 which highlights the lack of transparency in parish-level data and the high rates of pretrial incarceration in the region.<sup>41</sup>

## **D. PRA Request Assessment**

The Webster Parish Jail failed to respond to a PRA request submitted as part of this assignment earlier this year. Under Louisiana law, public records must be made available upon request unless subject to a specific exemption.<sup>42</sup> The failure to respond undermines statutory transparency requirements, prevents meaningful public oversight, and suggests potential noncompliance with state law. The Louisiana Supreme Court has emphasized that public records laws are essential to governmental accountability.<sup>43</sup> This non-response may be evidence of deficient transparency practices.

## **VI. Notable Cases and Complaints (Last Five Years)**

Publicly available information does not reveal major reported class-action litigation or high-profile federal cases specifically involving Webster Parish Jail in the past five years besides *United States v. Louisiana* which has

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<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> Corrections Division, *supra*.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> Vera Inst. of Justice, *Louisiana Locked Up: Webster Parish*, <https://www.vera.org/louisiana-locked-up/parish/Webster> (Apr. 20, 2026).

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 44:1 et seq. (West 2026).

<sup>43</sup> *Shane v. Parish of Jefferson*, 209 So. 3d 726 (La. 2015).

very far-reaching implications discussed earlier.<sup>44</sup> However, even in the absence of significant litigation, jail conditions may implicate constitutional violations, including deliberate indifference to medical needs<sup>45</sup>, excessive force against detainees<sup>46</sup>, or unconstitutional conditions of confinement.<sup>47</sup> The absence of documented litigation should not be interpreted as evidence of compliance, particularly in jurisdictions with limited access to legal resources.

## VII. Conclusion

The available evidence demonstrates that oversight and transparency at Webster Parish Jail are limited, fragmented, and largely dependent on sporadic external review rather than consistent, accessible public accountability. While the facility has passed formal inspections such as the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections BJC review and ultimately achieved compliance under the PREA audit framework, those findings are narrow in scope and do not fully capture broader conditions of confinement. The inconsistent and incomplete reporting of in-custody deaths, the absence of reliable demographic and population data, and the difficulty in locating audit materials collectively illustrate a systemic lack of transparency. This deficiency is further reinforced by the jail's failure to respond to a lawful public records request, raising legitimate concerns about compliance with Louisiana's Public Records Law and undermining the ability of the public to meaningfully assess institutional practices.

These gaps are particularly significant when viewed in the broader legal context governing pretrial detention and conditions of confinement, particularly given Louisiana's reliance on parish jails to house state and pretrial populations. Without reliable data, consistent oversight, or accessible reporting, it becomes exceedingly difficult to evaluate whether the jail is meeting constitutional standards under the Fourteenth Amendment or to identify potential violations such as deliberate indifference or unlawful detention practices. The absence of significant litigation or formal complaints should not be interpreted as evidence of compliance, but rather as a reflection of structural barriers to accountability common in rural jurisdictions. To address these concerns, stronger enforcement of public records obligations, increased frequency and accessibility of independent audits, and expanded public reporting requirements are necessary to ensure that facilities like Webster Parish Jail operate transparently and within constitutional bounds.

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## Citations

Ashley Nellis, *The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons*, Sent'g Project (2021).

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*Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97 (1976).

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<sup>44</sup> *United States v. Louisiana*, *supra*.

<sup>45</sup> *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97 (1976).

<sup>46</sup> *Kingsley v. Hendrickson*, 576 U.S. 389 (2015).

<sup>47</sup> *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520 (1979).

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