

Federal Bureau of Prisons to Compensate Almost 1600 People in Brooklyn Jail Blackout Case

August 21, 2023 – Lawyers for plaintiffs announced a major settlement today with the United States of America valued at approximately \$10 million for people incarcerated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons in the west building of the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, New York (“MDC”) during the eight-day blackout in the winter of 2019.

During the week from January 27, 2019 until February 3, 2019, as New York City suffered through a historic “polar vortex” of freezing weather, the MDC experienced a power outage. More than 1600 people were confined in dark, frigid conditions in the prison for a week, often locked in their cells for 24 hours a day, and without adequate food, medicine, clothing, blankets, or any way to communicate with their families. There was no electricity, frigid temperatures, no hot water, and the toilets did not flush.

“Taken together, this evidence paints a harrowing picture of prison conditions in the wake of the fire and power outage,” Judge Korman wrote in an earlier Order in the case. “In particular, the evidence describes a series of inhumane and potentially dangerous conditions that affected residents throughout the West Building during the week without power.”

Almost 1,600 individuals will be impacted by the settlement. The government has agreed to pay \$8,750 to almost 1,000 claimants for suffering these inhumane conditions. It will pay an additional \$8,750 to 69 people with untreated medical conditions. And it will pay \$2500 for approximately 554 people who submitted late claims.

The case is called *Scott v. United States* and was filed in 2019 in federal court in the Eastern District of New York. Class Counsel are Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP (Katherine Rosenfeld, O. Andrew F. Wilson, and Sara Estela), the Civil Rights Clinic of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law (Professor Betsy Ginsberg and clinic students), and Alexander A. Reinert.

People who were confined at the Metropolitan Detention Center during the blackout and who have questions about the settlement should contact mdcblackout@ecbalaw.com.

To review the settlement documents and for more information about the case, please visit MDCBlackout.com.