

# CALLING HOME TO MOM

To the Warden of Tamms Correctional Center, the Director of the Illinois Department of Corrections, and the Governor of Illinois

Inmates at Tamms, Illinois' supermax prison, have almost no human contact. Visitors are rare, and no phone calls are allowed. We, the undersigned, ask that the men of Tamms each be allowed to make a call home during the month of May for Mother's Day.

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## What is Tamms?

- Tamms Super Maximum Correctional Center, which opened in March 1998, is Illinois' only "supermax" prison.
- Every inmate is in solitary confinement in a 10' by 12' cell. Meals come in through a slot in the door.
- Men at Tamms eat alone, pray alone, walk the yard alone. There are no group activities of any kind.
- Tamms keeps strict limits on the amount of personal property men can keep – this includes family photos and Christmas cards.
- Inmates spend 23 hours a day in their cells; some only get two hours of exercise and one 20-minute shower each week.
- Some inmates arrive at Tamms with mental problems, and the strain of long-term isolation makes many more break down. Suicide attempts and self-mutilation are common at Tamms.
- The town of Tamms is located at the southernmost tip of Illinois. There's no bus service to the prison. There's no way for family or friends to get to Tamms without a car. Visits hardly ever happen, and visitors only see inmates through a Plexiglas wall.
- Most of the men at Tamms will some day be released from prison. Studies show that the psychological damage of long-term isolation makes it more likely that they will commit new crimes after release. Other studies cast doubt on claims that supermax prisons make prisons any safer for guards or inmates.
- Taxpayers spend \$90,000 a year to keep a man in Tamms supermax. It costs five times as much as it costs to keep an inmate in a maximum security prison.