

Tooth For a Tooth?

In *Tillery v Owens*¹, the court upheld that people jailed in Pennsylvania had the right to a level of health services designed to meet routine medical and dental needs. Yet, on November 20, 2019, Mercer County Prison Board President Thomas W. Amundsen told then-inmate Trenton J. Tompkins that neither the health services provider nor the prison would pay to fix the inmate's cracked tooth.

Tompkins sued Mr. Amundsen and health care provider PrimeCare Medical Inc. under 42 U.S.C. 1983 for showing deliberate indifference to his medical needs. On June 9th, 2020, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania granted Tompkins's request for pro bono counsel while also rejecting defendants' attempts to have the case dismissed.

Mercer County Prison holds over 300 people, many of whom are merely accused of crimes and awaiting trial. The outcome of this case may affect their ability to receive proper dental care while in custody.

Tillery v Owens, 719 F. Supp. 1256, 1305 (W.D.Pa. 1989),
aff'd, 907 F.2d 418 (3rd Cir. 1990)