

Jurors award inmate \$600,000

Senators upset by verdict, earlier decision that handed a former warden \$510,000

By Tim Smith

CAPITAL BUREAU

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COLUMBIA — A Marlboro County jury has awarded a state inmate \$600,000 after he sued the state's prison system alleging he was assaulted by officers, a spokesman for the prison said.

The verdict came last week, the same week that a former warden, who lost his job in June 2004, was awarded \$510,000 by a federal jury after he sued two prison officials for engaging in a civil conspiracy.

The state Department of Corrections is appealing both verdicts, said Josh Gelinas, a spokesman.

Sen. Mike Fair of Greenville, who chairs the Senate Corrections and Penology Committee, called the verdicts "bothersome."

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The \$510,000 verdict caught the eye of several senators. Sen. Phil Leventis, a Sumter Democrat, took to the floor this week

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to ask what could be done to prevent a recurrence.

Sen. Hugh Leatherman, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, has asked for all settlement information from the prison system, as well as from other agencies, Fair said.

John T. Mobley, lawyer for inmate Alonzo Brinkley, said Brinkley was beaten and maced by officers at Evans Correctional Institution near Bennettsville in November 2004.

"Basically, he stated that he was in line waiting for a haircut and they come up and started harassing him for no reason," Mobley said. "They said, 'Come with us,' took him off and started beating him and punching him and kicking him and maced him."

Mobley said the suit alleged gross negligence in the management of the prison, which the suit alleged was understaffed.