

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

PRIVATE PRISONS

Roberto Damien was appointed judge after a successful career as a prosecutor. After a few months on the bench, he went fishing with Bill Jameson, a former college roommate. Jameson is the CEO of a private prison company that houses prisoners for the state.

“How is business?” Damien asks Jameson.

“Why don’t you tell me?” Jameson quips back.

“Well it seems to me like we are sending fewer people to prison,” Damien remarks. “I don’t know if demographic changes have made this happen, or if evidence-based practices are paying off, but I have seen a difference.”

Hinting that he wants the judge to sentence more offenders to prison, Jameson responds, “When you needed campaign money for your prosecutor elections, you remember that I was your biggest contributor, right?”

“What are you getting at?” asks Damien.

YOU DECIDE

1. Should the judge continue in this conversation? Why or why not?
2. What factors influence judges’ sentencing decisions?