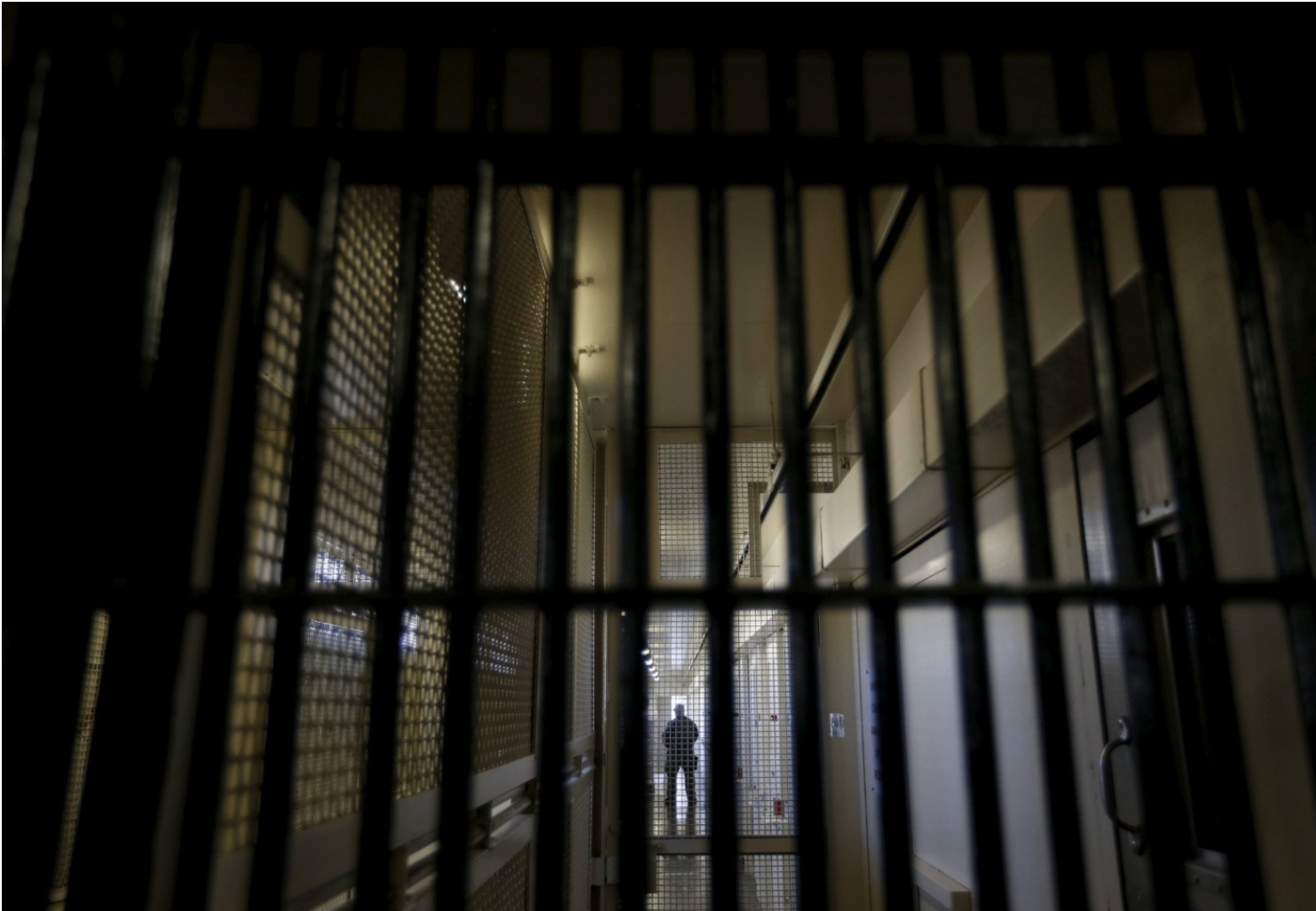


We cannot incarcerate ourselves out of crime



A guard stands behind bars at the Adjustment Center during a media tour of California's Death Row at San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, Calif., in 2015. (Stephen Lam/Reuters)

February 21

Kudos to Judge Shira A. Scheindlin for her insightful Feb. 19 Outlook essay, [“I put people in prison for too long. I had no](#)

[choice.](#)” The “lock ‘em up” mentality of mandatory minimum sentences that she described is not limited to the federal courts and is present to some degree in each state’s criminal-justice system, with similar results.

An unanswered question is why federal and state prosecutors, along with law enforcement leaders, aren’t demanding more rehabilitation services at our prisons. At least 60 percent of paroled prisoners return to prison because of a parole violation often connected to alcohol or drug use and related crime. Yet not all prisons have substance-abuse programs, including something as successful as Alcoholics Anonymous. Nor do all prisons have literacy programs, and a person who cannot read is on the path to reoffending.

Finally, the public is beginning to realize that we cannot incarcerate ourselves out of crime. It is well past time that our elected officials join this sobering reality.

Eugene M. Hyman, Los Altos, Calif.

The writer is a retired judge of the Superior Court of California County of Santa Clara.