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VOICES FROM INSIDE...

# STATEVILLE

## SPEAKS

JANUARY 2007

# Why We Can't Wait

Shaena Fazal

In April of 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail." In it, he responded to his "allies'" criticisms that he should have waited for a better time to challenge the status quo so he wouldn't have ended up in the County Jail. His letter was his answer to them, and in it he explained Why We Can't Wait: because change does not happen when people wait. As he put it, "progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability."

We too can't wait. We can't wait for others to suddenly come to the conclusion that our sentencing laws are neither fair nor just. We can't wait for the public to start caring about prisoners whom it has long considered out of sight, out of mind. We can't wait for everyone else to see the danger in increasingly long sentences and a decrease in rehabilitation. We cannot wait for our public education system to crumble

because we spend too much money on creating human warehouses for prisoners and not enough on educating our children in math, physical and social sciences and the much forgotten civics lessons. We can't wait until people with troubled lives commit crimes, instead of preventing crimes and attending to their needs when we have the opportunity. We can't wait on the opportunity to work constructively with the captive audience that is our prison population. And we can't wait for someone else to do this for us.

We must move from a place of complacency, from a position of entitlement and inaction to a place of empowerment where what we think matters. Much, if not most, of what people have in their lives that is good and meaningful is earned, not given to them. It is probably true that sooner or later, current

*Continued on Page 3...*

## One Prisoner

### – One Vote

Word from the Editor, Anaviel Rakemeyahu

One of the dilemmas of incarceration is not being allowed to have our voices heard because we are unable to participate in the democratic process. This problem can never be taken lightly. Without the representation of those who are incarcerated, who will be our voice? The incarcerated remain in a continuous state of limbo, allowing our fate to rest in the hands of elected officials who don't have our best interests in mind.

Every pre-election season, politicians bombard the airways, expressing their views, making their platform and agenda

*Continued on Page 3...*

*hope / change / redemption*

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# Coverage

WHEN YOU NEED IT

INMATES IN EACH DOC PRISON CAN SUBMIT ARTICLES TO  
STATEVILLE SPEAKS

## HJR-80 Committee Update Bill Ryan

The HJR 80 Committee has held two meetings, one on October 16 and the other on November 20. The first meeting was an organizing one to hear general guidance from Chair State Representative Art Turner.

Chair Art Turner opened the initial meeting by quoting HJR 80, which created the Long-Term Prisoner Study Committee. The committee, composed of 17 members, shall study and examine issues related to prisoners sentenced to life without parole and prisoners sentenced to terms in excess of 30 years.

Members were introduced. Those not previously identified in *Stateville Speaks* include State Representative Pat Lindner; Bill Jenkins, a victims' advocate, appointed by State Representative Tom Cross; Craig Findlley, PRB member, appointed by State Senator Frank Watson; Mike Waller, Lake Co. State Attorney, appointed by State Appellate Prosecutor; and Jennifer Kuhn, Victims' Advocate for the Attorney General, appointed by Attorney General Lisa Madigan. All committee appointments have been made except for Governor Blagojevich.

The Illinois Department of Corrections presented statistical data regarding prisoners and will provide support to the committee and to the researcher.

Chair Turner appointed three subcommittees:  
Program Committee - Dee Battaglia, chair  
Health Care Committee - Bill Ryan, chair  
Indeterminate Sentenced Offender Committee - Craig Findley, chair

During the second meeting Chair Turner recognized newly appointed member and completed assignments to subcommittees. Martha Henderson, PhD, Assistant Professor Southern Illinois University, will head up a team to conduct research. Henderson will meet with subcommittees' chairs and receive recommendations for study. Chair Turner emphasized that the HJR 80 resolution authorizes the committee to conduct a STUDY, collect data and submit a report. The Chair noted that the committee cannot make policy or change sentencing laws as policy is established by the IDOC, and sentencing laws are enacted by the Illinois General Assembly.

Several packets of material were distributed :

- \**Cost and Population Analysis and Projection* by Illinois Prison Talk
- \**Predicting Individual Recidivism: A safeguard for granting parole eligibility to lifers* by Joe Dole.
- \**Report of Commission 1994*
- \**Lockdown Prison Heart*, a collection of essays by Illinois prisoners, initiated by Renaldo Hudson, submitted by Bill Ryan.
- \**National Organization for Victim Assistance and Parents of Murdered Children Resolution*, urging the HJR 80 committee to inform affected families of the study being conducted by the HJR 80 committee, submitted by Bill Jenkins.
- \*Chair Turner indicated he has received several pieces of correspondence from various sources. These will be made available to appropriate subcommittee and to individual committees who wish to see them.

The agenda of future meeting will consist of committee reports and data collected by the IDOC and researcher. The subcommittees and researcher will present their reports at a public hearing. The date and location of public hearings will be announced later. The next meeting of the Committee will be

March 19, 2007, at the same location.

Anyone wishing to submit additional material to the HJR 80 committee can do so by mailing it to Chairman Art Turner. All material sent to me has been given to Chair Turner so there is no need to duplicate them.  
State Representative Art Turner, Chair  
HJR 80 Committee  
3849 W. Ogden  
Chicago IL 60623■

### “Yesss♦CER”

If you've been a **victim** of crime. If you **know** someone in **prison**. If you want to **end** the ever perpetuating cycle.

**Get CERious.**

\*\*See Page 13\*\*

(Fill out IPT Insert)

### *Stateville Speaks Staff*

Publisher: Bill Ryan  
Editors: Donald McDonald, Aldwin McNeal, Anaviel B. Rakemeyahu  
Assistant Editors: Stanley Howard, Rich Dyches, Jeanene Clay, Vincent Galloway, Renaldo Hudson, Tom Odle, Mychal Thompson, Ronnie Carrasquillo, Theresa Heater, Margaret Majos  
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Printer: Irish Press

*Why We Can't Wait Continued ...*

trends in sentencing will be unsustainable, will cost too much and the powers that be will make the necessary changes. It would be wrong to see that day as progress. It is not progress if you have not worked for it. Progress will be when we can demand sensible crime-prevention policies that both protect the public and do real justice; policies that are based on achieving results - on treating the disease, not just the symptoms.

We can't wait for this, and it is, in fact, the obligation of those of us who retain the right to vote, not to wait for it. If we do nothing, if we don't exercise our right to talk to our elected representatives, to engage the public in this debate, we cannot complain about anything. We can't afford that. Don't wait.■

*One Prisoner – One Vote Continued...*

known to the public, stating their positions and what they would do if elected.

The plight of incarcerated citizens has never been addressed by any politician. Why? Because our voice, just like our vote, does not count. Lawmakers and politicians recognize voters, those citizens who have the power to elect them into office as well as remove them from seats of power.

Dwelling in the Illinois prison system is an untapped political force that has the potential to bring about positive changes. This political force could cause lawmakers and politicians to initiate reform in prison education, health care (including mental health), parole for lifers and long term offenders, and programs. Through the system of proxy, which is the authority to act for another, prisoners would be able to participate in every democratic election by requesting that our proxy representative vote only for those politicians who include our issues in their platform and agenda. Every prisoner will be represented by at least one vote.

Prisoners must become politically conscious by doing research on each candidate. What are their views on issues we believe in? Do they support the death penalty, prison reform, rehabilitation, programs? Where do they stand on issues most important to our families and communities? Do the research and share your findings with your proxy representative. Be an informed voter and support this campaign.■



## Kairos News

As promised, the Stateville-Kairos 2 took place on the last weekend in September. This time a new group of 36 men actively participated in discussions on sharing God's love, forgiveness of self and others, and staying strong spiritually. Kairos, meaning God's Special Time, is a three-day weekend retreat, presented from a Christian perspective by volunteers. Men of all faiths were invited to attend.

The weekend is an experience like no other, interactive and powerful, a sharing of God's love. This weekend was no exception. There was a strong feeling of God's love for each man. "I have never felt so much love" was a common theme.

*Continued on Page 4...*

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IS ONLY \$10**



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Urge voting-citizen family and friends to sign up and become a part of a force to improve legislation.

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The N.I.V. Mission Statement is to better society by assisting to reduce overcrowding of prisons, reduce recidivism and improve societal productivity by strengthening rehabilitation, reforming sentencing and implementing programs to advocate positive change, productivity and restorative justice for the benefit of society as a whole.

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Mail slip to: N.I.V. P.O. Box 8546, Chicago, IL 60680.

The \*\*N.I.V.\*\* membership Database is connected with CER and Stateville Speaks



## Resource Corner

by Joseph Dole

### FREE BOOKS

Request free books by subject, author, or title. Be specific (U.S. history rather than just history, for example)

Urbana Champaign Books To Prisoners Project  
c/o Spineless Books  
P.O. Box 515  
Urbana, IL 61803

Books Through Bars  
4722 Baltimore Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19143

Prison Book Program  
c/o Lucy Parsons Bookstore  
130c Hancock St., Suite 100  
Quincy, MA 02169

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[info@prisonbookprogram.org](mailto:info@prisonbookprogram.org)

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P.O. Box 1846  
Bloomington, IN 47402-1846  
(send \$1.00 for catalog)  
*Continued on Page 12...*

## Parole Board Member Rejected

Illinois Senate Rejects Prisoner Review Board Member: Prisoner Advocacy Groups Behind the Scenes

Two prison reform groups - the Campaign in Support of C# Prisoners and the Long Term Prisoner Policy Project - worked behind the scenes to convince the Illinois Senate to reject a Prisoner Review Board appointee of Governor Rod Blagojevich. The appointee was former Peoria Police Chief John Stenson. Blagojevich appointed him to the Prisoner Review Board in 2004 and was asking the Senate to confirm him for another appointment until 2011.

Members of the C# Campaign and LT3P have been meeting with Senator Rickey Hendon, a Chicago Democrat who chairs the Executive Appointments Committee, and with Senator John Cullerton. They have urged the Senators to reject Stenson on the ground that he almost never voted to grant parole to rehabilitated C# prisoners even though they had perfect prison records and solid parole plans. According to early reports out of Springfield, other Prisoner Review Board members told Senator Hendon that Stenson is "hard to work with."

*Continued on Page 12...*

*Kairos News Continued...*

The Kairos volunteers shared their faith journey as they presented their topic. There were small group discussions, singing, praying, and tears were shed. The men were served coffee, lemonade, snacks and homemade cookies as a treat. It was definitely an environment of love. As one man said, "It was an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life." ■



## Remembering David Saxner

James "Yaki" Sayles

David Saxner passed away unexpectedly on November 23, 2006 from a massive heart attack. Remembering David Saxner is something that I do on a daily basis, and I hope that everyone that knew him or had the least contact with him will never forget him.

I first met David in one of the legal visiting rooms at Stateville over thirty years ago. He was working with the People's Law Office, and was soon helping to defend, on two different occasions, prisoners that had been charged with serious offenses. David helped to build support for those prisoners in the Chicago area, and they were all acquitted, due largely to the work that he did. Even at that time, David's actions were out of the ordinary because, as most people now know, David had recently been released from federal prison. Most released prisoners don't immediately engage in such activities. David was extraordinary.

David's work on behalf of other prisoners began before he was released from prison, when he filed suit on behalf of another federal prisoner-- a suit which was won and today stands as a precedent-setting case in prisoners' rights law.

David went on to become one of the pillars in the community and legal defense of the Pontiac Brothers. And, as we all know, he devoted the last years of his life to the effort to obtain fairness in the parole process for the remaining indeterminate sentenced prisoners in Illinois.

Part of David's legacy is and will remain the Campaign in Support of C# Prisoners, the organization that he founded and directed. We will continue to miss him and love him, as each day increases our appreciation for his unselfish devotion to the cause of indeterminate sentenced prisoners, and to his love of humanity.

*David advocated for Yaki's release from prison for 30 years until his release 2 years ago. ■*

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## Dee Battaglia Retires

Bill Ryan

On December 31, Dee Battaglia retired from the IDOC. Miss Dee, as prisoners called her, was a true professional who served in Corrections for 30 years. She will be greatly missed by prisoners and staff alike. Miss Dee treated everyone with respect and dealt honestly and straightforwardly with issues.

Battaglia was the first African American woman to head a maximum security prison in the U.S., and the first woman in Illinois to do so. Her performance in the IDOC was exemplary. She maintained strict security while implementing positive programs.

*Continued on Page 10...*

LOST?  
**Wanna Help But  
Don't Know  
Where to Begin?**



Here are some ways you can help the many organizations committed to positive reform

**1.**

### **Subscribe to Stateville Speaks**

\$10.00 keeps you informed and us going. Inmates, encourage family members to subscribe

**2.**

### **Fill out Enclosed Insert**

Sign the CER Petition. See Pg. 13 for Details.

**3.**

### **Join the N.I.V. Mission**

The N.I.V. is a lobbying force. With a large number of voting members, N.I.V. can help influence legislators

**4.**

### **Get on the Web**

[www.ILCER.org](http://www.ILCER.org) ♦ [www.LT3P.org](http://www.LT3P.org)  
[www.IllinoisPrisonTalk.com](http://www.IllinoisPrisonTalk.com)

**5.**

### **VOTE**

Get Registered TODAY. Call 312.603.0906

**6.**

### **SHOW UP**

Attend announced HJR80 meetings, CER meetings and whatever you get an invitation to. Not getting an invitation? Join the mailing list by subscribing to Stateville Speaks, filling out the IPT insert and joining the N.I.V. mission

# Essays, Letters and Insight

PROPOSALS AND PERSUASIVE EDITORIALS



## Can You Take a Punch?

Renaldo Hudson

Late last night in the darkest hour, I was awakened with a heart throbbing, soul piercing thought that continues to change me even as I write these words. As my body trembled with thoughts of yesterday, it wasn't long before I began to hear my sub-conscious asking questions of my conscious mind. "Can you take a punch?" Thoughts began to vibrate through my mind until I saw a clear picture. As the picture clears up for me, I'm forced to ask you the question. "Can you take a punch?" metaphorically speaking. I'm not talking about a physical punch that may damage your body. I'm talking about that mental punch that causes men and women to give up on life and try to commit suicide. I'm talking about that punch in the courtroom, when the court decides your life isn't worth anything and they sentence you to life or 100 years at 85%. Can you take the punch, when it seems like you're the only one in the world that can see your worth? Can you take the punch when it's so dark

in your life that you can't tell the difference between day and night? Oh, the thousands of men and women within the prison system all across this nation, I want you to know you can take the punch. And especially the guilty seeking to rebuild their lives.

We must develop our faith and the hope we live with. And I must tell the guilty: You must take the very difficult step of taking responsibility for your actions. Remorse is a must, and very necessary, in order to move toward rehabilitation. Can you take a punch? You can if you develop your faith. You must be so full of faith that no matter what you hear or see, you won't turn from trusting God. You won't turn back to the crimes of yesterday. Brother & sister, all of us have a destiny that isn't defined by our past. We must know that we are not alone. We must continue to develop our strength and hope for the future. Can you take a punch? I say, Yes! Because I met the "king of punch taking," and he has trained me in the art of taking punches. And there is no question that he is the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world at taking punches. And just for the record, he doesn't consult our past to determine our future. In fact, Jesus taught me that when a man and woman's ways please the Lord, he will make even your enemies to be at peace with you.

Can you take a punch? I say think about your life. Where are you? And what are you doing with it? You must be determined that you're not going to allow the pessimistic vomit of yesterday's thinking to overtake you. You must be dedicated to the spirit of redemption. And by the grace and mercy of God, you'll be able to take a punch. But keep this in mind. Grace is the overseer of purpose.

So if you want to develop the strength to take a punch, try three of my steps.

- 1) Faith: You must develop your faith and know that if God is for you, no one or nothing can stand against you and win.
- 2) Hope: Hope is the breath that keeps most prisoners alive. You must learn the true meaning of hope and once you get it, hold onto her with a Kung Fu grip.
- 3) Persistence: Once you develop a proper plan of action for your life, remain persistent until you see your plan come to fruition.

In closing, prison isn't the best you can do. Don't accept it as your destiny. Our society has developed a "lock them up and throw away the key" mentality. We recycle everything except the human species, which happens to be our most valuable untapped resource. My question is simple. Can you take a punch?■

**03.19.07**  
**Save the Date**

**ATTEND**  
**The HJR80**  
**Committee Meeting**  
**@**  
**The Thompson Ctr**  
100 W. Randolph  
16<sup>th</sup> Floor Chicago, IL  
**11 A.M.**

The presence of Family members of the Incarcerated as well as Victim Family Members is imperative.  
See Pg 2 for Details

## The Abandoned Mentally Ill

There's a serious crisis that has surfaced within the prison system, which concerns the mentally ill. Due to state cutbacks and the closing of mental health facilities, mentally ill people are bussed and displaced into the prison system, abandoned. Housed on units, in dorms, rooms, or cells, other inmates do not want to deal with them. Many inmates have the psychological experience and know how to communicate but sometimes offering help can be mistaken and cause more problems.

While the prison population is expanding, the mentally ill are pushed into the midst of chaos. Many suffer from further abuse by the ignorance of others, who take advantage of them by stealing their commissary, taking their property, and making a mockery of them by poking fun. Further injury comes from the countless complaints against them to staff or administration about their hygiene problems, keeping their laundry, bedding, and bodies clean, which then becomes the responsibility of others. They are injured by the system when inmates complain, often understandably, but its results are cruel where the mentally ill are sent to the hole.

The hole, segregation, isolation, is the only answer the prison system has to offer them, to hide the problem from population. But in isolation they are still housed or celled up with someone who for months has to deal with the problem of that mentally ill prisoner. It's sad.

What can we do to get the prison system to create separate housing and caregivers, such as inmate porters to assist them with hygiene care and counselors assigned specifically for their therapy? When is the prison system going to stop the undue punishment of these inmates by constantly sending them to the hole for long periods? They need help and I wonder what awful thing will have to occur for someone of power to realize this. Meanwhile, I pray we all realize sanity is a blessing and for those who suffer loss of sanity, let us be more compassionate towards them. ■



## Atonement, At What Cost Is It Achieved?

William Peebles

As men convicted of crimes (those who are not actually innocent), how do we achieve atonement with the victim, the victim's family, our children, wives, mothers and society at large? To atone means "to make amends, repair and restore to a right state one who has been wronged, or injured unjustly." If we break down the word atone, we get "at one." To be at one means to be in harmony, congruous or of the same mind. How can the offender and the offended reach a state of harmony and sameness of mind? More importantly, how many of us are prepared and willing to expend the effort, and make the sacrifice to achieve genuine "atonement?"

In order to develop a heart for atonement one must first feel remorse. I'm not talking about feeling sorry because you were caught, convicted and punished; I'm talking about heart-felt remorse for ever having transgressed against the laws of God, and thus injuring, harming or wronging another member of the human family. If the offender can attain this level of humanity, then, and only then, are we prepared for the rigors of achieving atonement for injurious deeds. Are we willing to be humble and non-defensive as those whom we've wronged verbally assail us, venting their anger, fear, anguish and grief at us? Could we take it, and in

*Continued on Page 12...*

## From the Publisher

### From the Publisher

by Bill Ryan

Happy Holidays to everyone. I wish you great joy and peace in this season.

### Prisoner Power

There are 45,000 prisoners in the Illinois prison system. Just think for a minute of the power we would have if only half of prisoners' family members and supporters joined a movement to effect social change. Over 20,000 people speaking out to their neighbors, churches, and organizations would quickly transform into 100,000 people speaking with one voice. Now, that would be POWER. We can do this but we need the help of everybody who is reading this newspaper. Please fill out the enclosed form and get your friends to do the same.

### Changes & Announcements

The March issue of *Stateville Speaks* will be devoted to women's issues. The deadline for submissions is February 1. The September issue will be devoted to creative writing. In order to clarify our review process, we will hold short stories and poems until the annual Creative Writing issue. Writers can submit stories and poems until August 1 for publication in September.

We are planning to reformat future issues of *Stateville Speaks* into the following sections:

Activism: Suggestions on how to impact public policy (ideas from other states welcome)

Legislation: Current proposals or suggestions

Legal Programs

Fun page: cartoons, crosswords, etc.

Letters to the Editor

Health Section

Resources for Prisoners

Book Reviews

Message from the Editors

*Continued on Page 9...*

## Autonomy

Sterling Gray

Autonomy gives a person the right to be in control, independent to make self-governing decisions, which will benefit or punish that person. This universal truth is never more self-evident than with an incarcerated individual.

Although we are fixed to the routine of a monotonous existence, there lies an opportunity for self growth via education, religion, moral restraint, or the ambition to want something more in life than what is currently had. It's a fact prison lacks the essential self-awareness or social programs. However, ingenuity is key to extracting the positive attributes of incarceration. Do not sit idle wishing all goes well, with your thoughts focused on nostalgic choices, which were a predicate to the current circumstances. Now is the time to assess past mistakes. You have to be assertive with focused goals that fall within the realm of practicality as it relates to your resources and ability to achieve them. No one will do for you what you have to do for yourself.■

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## Mentally Ill in Prison

Jason Cook

I am one of many prisoners within the Illinois Department of Corrections who suffers from mental illness. The mental health services which we receive are very minimal and superficial, to say the least. The prison's solution to mental illness is to dope you up on psychotropic medication (which has all sorts of undesirable side effects) and keep you compliant, apathetic, and lethargic, attempting to transform a potentially problematic prisoner into a tranquil, docile individual.

But follow-up procedures are inadequate, and the treatment is incomplete. There is no in-depth

psychotherapy or intensive counseling to equip the afflicted with the necessary coping skills, mechanisms, and strategies to transcend their disorders and maintain a positive, constructive quality of life. Not to mention that there are virtually no rehabilitative programs for a prisoner to utilize in hope of a successful re-entry into society. Some of us are serving life sentences without the possibility of parole, but we can still greatly benefit from adequate programs and proper treatment.



It is obvious that the I.D.O.C.'s programs and mental health services are inferior and need funding and staffing to be effective and successful. We need to address these problem areas to reduce the recidivism rate and increase the percentage of ex-convicts who are able to lead successful lives as productive members of society.■

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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Stateville Speaks,

My plight is simple. In 1994 I was wrongfully convicted of murder. After my conviction I sought ballistic testing on the gun with new testing called IBIS, Integrated Ballistic Identification System. In fact, law enforcement regularly uses this computer matching in ballistics today.

I sought this new testing pursuant to 725 ILCS 5/116-3, which allows for DNA and fingerprint testing. However, I was denied this testing. The 2nd District Appellate Court held that the General Assembly would have to amend this law to allow for other forms of scientific testing in order for me to receive new testing. (792 NE 2d 378)

My logic is this: the original bill was passed in 1997, allowing for DNA and fingerprint testing not available at the time of the trial. To prove actual innocence, I believe the law should keep up with the times. IBIS technology is used by law enforcement to catch criminals and it should also be used to establish innocence. 725 ILCS 5/116-3 should be amended to allow for other forms of scientific testing besides DNA and fingerprint testing that are commonly accepted and used by the scientific community and law enforcement.

I also ask that you consider that the Illinois Constitution states that for every problem at law there shall be a remedy at law. In theory I take this to mean the law should protect all members of society from the highest offices all the way down to those of us at the bottom of the social strata.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Patrick Pursley ■

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## Forgiveness

Aldwin Mc Neal

Forgiveness is that rare quality or strength that seems to escape us as a people. Our inability to let our pain go is because we believe in some small way our pain helps us to maintain a connection with our fallen loved ones. We believe this pain is an ungiving bridge which

*Continued on page 10...*



## Prisoner Litigation

Exhausting your Administrative Remedies  
George Goodman

When an individual is incarcerated for any length of time, it's almost inevitable that some event, whether it will be lost personal property or an ongoing civil rights violation(s), will require the use of the Administrative Grievance Process, and possibly the state or Federal court system.

In seeking relief for these wrongs, the first and ESSENTIAL step in the grievance process is outlined in Title 20 Illinois Administrative Code §504F.

The Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (42 U.S.C. §1997) requires that prisoners filing under 42 U.S.C. §1983 or any other federal law must exhaust available administrative remedies before filing a federal complaint concerning conditions of confinement. Since this aspect of the Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1995 (PLRA) was enacted, state courts have also adopted this requirement. The bottom line is that if you fail to exhaust or complete the grievance procedure all the way to the final disposition by the Administrative Review Board (ARB), before you file your suit, it WILL be dismissed.

Due to a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling (see, Woodford v. Ngo, 126 S.Ct. 2378 (2006)), it is also important to meet the time frames set forth in 20 IL Admin Code §504F Grievance Procedure, these time frames are as follows:

1. A prisoner must file a grievance within 60 days after discovery of the incident, occurrence, or problem that gives rise to the grievance.
2. The Grievance Officer and Chief Administrative Officer have 60 days to respond with their decision on the institutional level.

3. You then have 30 days in which to appeal this decision to the Director via the ARB.
4. The ARB and Director then have 6 months to respond to your appeal with their final disposition.

These steps must be followed BEFORE you file a suit in court, or it WILL be dismissed regardless of its merits.

\*\*\*CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE\*\*\*



## Prisoners Against the War Contest

Stanley Howard

Prisoners Against the War, formed by Stanley Howard and other Stateville prisoners, in conjunction with the Military Project, are pleased to announce an essay contest for Illinois prisoners. Participants must write in 250 words or less an essay concerning why they are against the war and why they support bringing the troops home now. Each essay will eventually be sent to the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan via the Military Project in New York City. Each essay must be printed clearly or typed and postmarked no later than June 1, 2007. Mail to Stateville Speaks, 2237 Sunnyside, Westchester, IL, 60154.

*From the Publisher Cont...*

Community Outreach  
Voices of Forgiveness  
Voice of the Reformed  
Sports  
Women's Issues

Writers, please submit articles related to these sections. We encourage editors and assistant editors to educate others about the new format. Other suggestions are invited, especially from editors and assistant editors. Also, if anyone wishes to be an assistant editor, please let us know. We have several prisons covered but not all.

Also, I am getting so much mail (sometime 40 to 50 letters a week), and I answer each of them but cannot keep this up. I need to spend time on other activities related to *Stateville Speaks*, HJR 80, organizing supporters, and I have a family and grandchildren that I love to see. So please continue to send information about issues in prison, suggestions for reform, etc. but I will probably not be able to answer them. I hope you will understand. Please keep sending the information: prisoners voices need to be heard.

### **Subscribers**

Lastly, we are experiencing financial difficulties, so we encourage those who can to subscribe. \$10 a year for four issues!

A special thanks to the Kenneth & Harle Montgomery Foundation and the Tamms Committee whose generosity made this issue possible.■

The four finalists will receive special recognition, a prize and a copy of the Anti-War Novel: *Homefront* by Tony Christini. *Homefront* and other books about social issues may be purchased at [Mainstaypress.org](http://Mainstaypress.org). Winners will be announced and essays published in future *Stateville Speaks* and GI issues. Good Luck!■

*Forgiveness Continued...*

allows us an automatic path to the beautiful memories collected over time with our loved ones. This pain is a constant reminder of the ache in our hearts, an ache we have become all too familiar with, when triggered by even the smallest events that resurrect the image of that precious someone we lost. And we are saddened to feel that the only way we can enjoy the fond memories is if it's accompanied with the sting of heartache. How do we overcome this pain? How do we heal? There is no set rule or way to overcome the hurt. There is no time limit. But, I have discovered that within us there is a spirit, a spirit that breeds comfort and strength. Two advocates in freeing us from the servitude of pain. We must, however, feel comfortable in being strong enough to open the door, without reluctance, to allow this great presence to come through. This is the first step in the journey to forgiveness. The only way to make our broken hearts better. ■

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To Whom It May Concern:

I have long pondered the oft-asked query "What about the victims/family of the victims?" The justice system is not predicated on healing, repair, or reform so much as it is on vengeance and punishment. Of course, this is, or should be, understandable when one considers the lives, families, and communities that are devastated by violent crime. Violent crime leaves the victims, their loved ones, and society in general in a debilitating state of terror, anger, and pain that precludes consideration of anything but vengeance and punishment.

However, I have watched interviews on television of the surviving family members of murder victims after the alleged murderer (and I use the term "alleged murderer" because it is well



documented that innocent men and women have been convicted and sentenced to death or natural life, only to be exonerated years later) has been executed and when asked "how do you feel?" an overwhelming number of them admit that revenge did not afford them the level of solace and/or closure that they believed it would.

So the question remains, "What about the victims/victims' family?" What would bring about a degree of solace, closure, and mental/spiritual healing? In most cases other than the victim-impact statements, there is seldom interaction/communication between victim and victimizer. One need only look at the "atonement" hearings in post-apartheid South Africa to see the benefit of such an exercise. However, the victims/loved ones of the victims rarely get the chance to vent or confront or ask questions of the victimizer. Thus the aggrieved are left with a chasm of pain, anger, and lingering questions in their hearts, minds, and souls.

To address this issue, I propose a voluntary program that would provide a venue for the meeting of the victim/family members of the victim and the victimizer. It would be conducted by trained grief counselors, victim advocates, and clinical psychologists to facilitate dialogue between the two parties. This exercise would go beyond a simple and utterly non-satisfying, "I'm sorry" or show of

remorse by the victimizer. It would encompass helping the aggrieved achieve spiritual, mental, and emotional health, and closure. It would also assist the victimizer in accepting responsibility for and gaining a "true" understanding of just how deeply, and in some cases irrevocably, their actions have impacted other human beings. This program would be a selfless act of "atonement" by the victimizer with no regard for personal gain or advantage. This means this act could not be used as a mitigating factor to obtain parole or any other benefit without the expressed consent of the victim/victim's family members. I say this only because I want it to be crystal clear to the aggrieved that the victimizer has no "hidden agenda" and to prevent insincere men and women from trying to play the system and thus victimize the victim yet again.

Needless to say, I am not a clinical psychologist so I have no idea as to what paradigm to construct to achieve this lofty goal. My intent is to put the notion on the table in hopes that trained professionals will create a model program. I welcome all constructive responses from all interested parties.

With Sincere Humility,

Mr. William X. Peoples ■

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*Dee Battaglia Cont...*

The September 2006 issue of *Stateville Speaks* described the difficulties Battaglia faced in her assignment as Chief of Programs and Assessments. In her resignation letter, Battaglia urged the IDOC to accord women in Corrections the same respect as men and urged the creation of positive programs. Battaglia faced one of the most difficult challenges in state government in her new position and lacked crucial support.

*Stateville Speaks* thanks Miss Dee for her hard work and dedication. We wish her the very best in the next stage of her life. ■

# Creative Corner

WHEN INSPIRATION HITS...POEMS WRITINGS. CONNOTATIONS...



*David Saxner wrote the following poems to Ronnie Carrasquillo, A C# Prisoner, after Ronnie was denied parole in October 2006, 1 month before David's death.*

## Quick Thought Re: The PRB

David Saxner

The bear caught us in its grip  
Stabbed us with its claws  
Twisting them like knives  
Ripping out our insides  
The blood flowed like rivers  
As the bear jumped  
Up and down on us  
Stomping on our muscles  
And bones  
We were dazes and disoriented  
Gasping for air  
But we knew all the while  
Our wounds would heal  
And our journey would continue■

## We Ran Into a Brick Wall Today

David Saxner

We ran into a brick wall today  
At 200+ miles an hour

A violent encounter of opposites  
It was like  
Being under a collapsing building  
Bricks and dust  
Flying everywhere  
Our dreams and aspirations  
Shattered like glass  
Crashing down all around us  
Crushed in a split second  
The impact was violent  
Like war  
Pain and trauma  
Billowed up in smoke  
The suffering is finite however  
We get up wobbling  
And disheveled  
Dust off our clothes  
And walk around the rubble. ■

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## TOMORROW

by Jim Childers

I try not to dwell on, or even to think  
of past hopes or of dreams that so often  
just sink.

I try not to think of a long, distant past  
filled first with hope, now with sorrow  
that lasts.

I try not to think of the "what ifs" in my  
life,  
The 'what could have beens', the  
neglected advice.

I try not to think of how time leaves  
behind  
Those of us deemed by the world as  
unkind.

I try not to think of the hate and the  
rage,  
And the innocent children who won't  
come of age.

I try not to think of the wars and the

violence,  
Or the millions of voices forever now  
silenced.

I try not to think of starvation that kills,  
Or of suffering and pain for too many  
too real.

I try not to think about all of the bad,  
Or how humanity often just makes me  
so sad.

I try not to wonder if it's ever too late  
To erase from this planet the  
unspeakable hate.

I try not to wonder where the kind  
hearts have gone.  
Or what makes good people sometimes  
choose to do wrong.

(When wrong leads to nothing but  
sorrowful plight,  
The best path to take is the one to the  
right.)

I try not to think of one day being free,  
Or how those filled with bias will  
always see me.

I try not to think about so many things.

*Continued on Page 12...*



*Atonement Continued...*

return exhibit genuine remorse, empathy, compassion, accountability and meekness? Would we do it with no thought or promise of personal gain, doing it only for the sake of the aggrieved?

True atonement would entail our returning to our various communities and ridding them of the spiritual, mental and educational malaise that permeates our society. Atonement would call for us to take in hand every young brother/sister displaying attitudes and behavior reminiscent of the lack of moral values that led us to wrong doing. Who would be better at detecting the signs and administering the cure to these young men/women? This is atonement. This is repair. This qualifies us if not for forgiveness, then at least for continued existence in the society we've plagued.■

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*Resources Cont...*

Greater Friends Newsletter  
Attn: Greater Friends Subscription  
Pennsylvania Prison Society  
245 N. Broad St. Suite 300  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(monthly newsletter dealing with prison and lifer issues and legislation. \$3.00 a year for prisoners, \$15.00 for others)

Grapevine Newsletter  
Pennsylvania Lifers Support Group  
P.O. Box 256  
Wellsboro. PA. 16901  
(bi-monthly newsletter dealing with lifer issues, legislation in PA. \$3.00 a year for prisoners, \$8.00 for others)

Peace Work  
AF SC  
2161 Massachusetts Ave.  
Cambridge, MA 02140  
(monthly publication on "Global thought and local action for nonviolent social change"  
\$1.00 a year for prisoners, \$23.00 for

others)

Friends4Lifers.Com  
P.O. Box 52634  
London N7 OWU England  
(free penpal site for lifers and long term prisoners. Send a short ad about yourself and the type of person you're interested in writing. Make sure to leave some space at the top and bottom of the page; print clearly; enclose picture if you want; also, if you speak other languages write an ad in each language as it will be seen around the world)  
www.friends4lifers .com ■

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*Parole Board Member Rejected Cont...*

Hendon acknowledged on the Senate floor that prison-reform groups had multiple complaints about Stenson. Sen. John Cullerton, D-Chicago, said he was told Stenson refused to recuse himself from voting on parole for a prisoner Stenson had arrested 30 years ago, when the prisoner was 14 years old. That prisoner, Johnny Savory, was recently released on parole against strong opposition from Stenson by a narrow vote.

Republicans complained that with a four-decade law enforcement career, Stenson was highly qualified for the job on the board, which considers parole, clemency and revocation and restoration of good time. They said Stenson, who makes \$72,950, was being "railroaded" because Hendon doesn't like his votes to deny parole.

Stenson's confirmation failed on a 25-25 vote. On the floor of the Senate, Sen. Emil Jones, the president of the Senate, said he had heard bad things about Stenson. Despite the significant opposition to Stenson's confirmation, the Governor may still resubmit his name for confirmation, but Rebecca Rausch, the Governor's spokesperson said the complaints about Stenson were "new to us," and she did not know if he would be resubmitted.  
David Saxner, before his untimely death

this Thanksgiving had worked hard to get Stenson off the PRB. After the vote to reject him, Shaena Fazal of LT3P said, "David must be looking down on all this and smiling."■

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*Tomorrow Cont...*

But I am still human; my heart still can sing.

Captivity cannot conceal all my sorrow, even if at times I can't think of tomorrow.

It's easier said than done, this trying not to think of all the sad, the bad, that makes ones hopes sink.

But to lose hope, to stop dreaming, that things will improve is to give up on humanity, and that I won't do.

Nor do I truly believe it to be, Because through it all I've been privileged to see those with commitment and those with the heart to tend and to mend to a world torn apart.

Yes, I try not to think about another tomorrow. Tomorrow's not real for me or my sorrow.

What about you? Do you care? Do you feel? Can you hear your heart? Is your tomorrow real?

Will you share your soul with the tomorrows to come?

Or is the humanity in your heart, in your soul, all done?

Tomorrow will always be with us because

Deep in our hearts and our souls there is love.

So find your heart and search for you soul, and never let your tomorrows go. ■

# “Yesss CER”



## Citizens for Earned Release

Bill Ryan

Recently, the HJR80 Committee to Study Long-Term Prisoners decided that it would not consider reinstating parole. While the Committee’s decision was disappointing, we are encouraged by its commitment to work on increasing programs, reviewing the delivery of healthcare and making the parole process for indeterminately sentenced prisoners fairer. However, we believe that the time is ripe for Illinois’ lawmakers and the public to think about and debate over earned release from prison. The number of people who were disappointed that the Committee “took retroactive parole off the table,” is encouraging, and as a result, *Stateville Speaks* founded Citizens for Earned Release, or CER, to work exclusively on bringing back a system of earned release.

Citizens for Early Release (CER) is a group of interested organizations, citizens, prisoners’ families, victims of crime and former prisoners who believe that prisoners’ issues are human rights issues, and who believe that Illinois should resuscitate earned release of prisoners. CER had its inaugural meeting in December of 2006 and plans to meet again at the end of January. CER is a grassroots organization that believes power comes from the people. Interested people can sign up to be on our mailing and email list and learn more about CER at [www.ilcer.org](http://www.ilcer.org) or fill out and return the insert in this edition of *Stateville Speaks*.

The philosophy supporting earned release is far more sensible than the philosophies behind determinate sentencing or irrational proposals for wholesale parole. Earned release would enable society to sufficiently punish people who commit crimes while simultaneously recognize that all people have the capacity for change and can

become contributing members to society.

There are good reasons to support earned release. First, earned release actually makes neighborhoods and communities safer. To earn release from prison, an independent body will have to determine whether it is safe to release someone back to society and can provide conditions and supervision of that release. In contrast, the system we have today allows prisoners (other than those sentenced to life) to walk out of prison when they are done with their terms regardless of whether they are dangerous. Earned release on the other hand, would ensure that only the best of the best ever get released from prison.

***“...enable society to sufficiently punish people who commit crimes while simultaneously recognize that all people have the capacity for change.”***

Secondly, harsher sentencing trends have led to an increase in the number of geriatric prisoners. Studies nationwide indicate that imprisoning elderly prisoners costs nearly three times as much as younger prisoners, due in large part to special health concerns for aging prisoners. Elderly prisoners are also far less likely to commit crimes. One study out of Pennsylvania found that prisoners older than 50 years old who had served at least 25 years in prison had a recidivism rate of only 2%; of that 2% not a single former prisoner was rearrested for a violent crime. In contrast, the general recidivism rate hovers over 50%.

Third, a system of earned release encourages constructive use of one’s time by participating in programs, learning new skills, reading and writing and focusing on rehabilitation. Prisoners have to earn their freedom back under this system; they have to do something. This makes the prisons safer for the correctional staff and for prisoners; it also makes it safer for the public, as rehabilitated prisoners have lower recidivism rates. A good example of the success of this policy is the C# prisoners who have are eligible for and have obtained parole: the C#’s generally have a 10% recidivism rate – unless they are college educated, in which case they have a 4% recidivism rate. This is in sharp contrast to the general recidivism rate of over 50%.

Finally, it is a sign of a just society to recognize that people have the capacity to change and make positive contributions to society. This sentiment is reflected in the Illinois Constitution, which requires that prisoners be “restored to useful citizenship.”

CER believes that for all these reasons – and more – earned release is a serious human rights issue; in fact, it’s *the* human rights issue of our time. Our position and advocacy for earned release is not a popular one, but that doesn’t mean we can’t achieve our goals. With solid effective public education and a collective effort to talk to our legislators and appropriate policymakers, we can shift public support in our direction. We have the power to bring earned release back to Illinois. Join CER today to help us achieve our goal! ■



# THE BENEFITS OF A SYSTEM OF EARNED RELEASE

Aviva Futorian

*To Stateville Speaks readers: This is a rough draft. It will become excellent when as many of you as have good ideas make it better. Make suggestions, try your hand at a rewrite, come up with criticisms and new ideas. Send your thoughts to Aviva Futorian, 2440 N. Lakeview, Chicago, IL 60614.*

## Earned Release: A Definition

While earned release systems differ from each other in many respects, all have in common these factors: A prisoner is given a minimum sentence at the time of conviction based on the severity of the crime, among other factors. During the period of that sentence, the prisoner is given opportunities for education, job training and socialization. At the end of the minimum sentence, the prisoner becomes eligible for earned release, whereby a review board evaluates the prisoner for release, based on his/her record and recommendations from prison staff. The board releases only those prisoners who demonstrate remorse, have excellent behavior records, complete education and job training, and get along with staff and other prisoners – in other words, those who show that they are no longer a danger to society. Released prisoners remain under state supervision for a number of years in order to confirm the appropriateness of their release.

### **The Benefits of a system of earned release:**

#### **1. A system of earned release protects society.**

Discussions of earned release usually focus on releasing people from prison. Equally important is that it has the ability to keep locked up those prisoners who continue to present a danger to society (unlike our current system which has to release prisoners when their sentences are up). They can be incarcerated indefinitely, regardless of the length of their minimum

sentences. Thus, in separating those who have turned from those who have not, a prisoner review board can protect society from repeaters, recidivists, and those who might harm other persons.

#### **2. A system of earned release makes the prisons safer for staff and prisoners.**

By creating an incentive for good behavior, a earned release system makes prisoners want to treat other prisoners and staff with care and good will. No prisoner can win release without staff recommendations. Prisoners stop focusing on gang loyalty or harassing staff and start making sound choices. Under Illinois' former parole system, prisoners were known to warn staff of impending danger.

***“After achieving the goals necessary to win release over the period of their minimum sentences, released prisoners will return to society with new social and economic skills.”***

Further, with more prisoners winning release, a reduced prison population will make staff less stressed and will enable them to do their jobs with the professionalism that existed under the old parole system.

#### **3. A system of early release encourages rehabilitation.**

After achieving the goals necessary to win release over the period of their minimum sentences, released prisoners will return to society with new social and economic skills. Illinois' current recidivism rate of

54% will look more like the 4-10% rate that exists for the former parolees (those sentenced before 1978) or the 2% rate in Pennsylvania. Moreover, instead of being a drain on our welfare/charitable systems, the prisoners will have job skills that will enable them to contribute to society.

#### **4. A system of earned release saves millions of dollars.**

The net reduction of prisoners will save the state millions of dollars. Right now the average annual cost of housing a prisoner in Illinois is \$23,000; for older prisoners the cost is even higher. Illinois has not estimated these costs; however, the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives estimates that the nationwide average to incarcerate older inmates is \$69,000 compared to \$22,000 for all inmates. Thus, every 100 elderly prisoners released would reduce IDOC prison expenditures by \$6,500,000 annually. This money could be utilized to provide re-entry services as well as effective crime prevention programs.

Also, the decrease in recidivism will result in cost savings to our judicial system. And the re-entering skilled work force will result in savings to our welfare/charity institutions and will create additional wealth in our society.

#### **5. A system of earned release stabilizes poor neighborhoods.**

Prisoners frequently come from the poorest neighborhoods. Their imprisonment further impoverishes their neighborhoods and makes them less safe. Locking up men can make female households more vulnerable. The return of

rehabilitated men with job skills will stabilize neighborhoods, making them safer and more economically productive.

**6. A system of earned release enriches poor families.**

Families of inmates are poorer because these fathers, mothers, siblings or children are unable to provide for their families. Families also suffer enormous burdens from huge phone bills, providing money to their imprisoned loved ones for overpriced bare necessities, and having to travel as much as 12 hours round trip to make a visit.

When rehabilitated inmates are able to return to their families, the benefits are enormous. Reunited families have parents who are able to love, raise and educate their children. Instead of draining the family's meager assets to support a prisoner, the prisoner will be able to support the family better than s/he could before her/his imprisonment.

**7. A system of earned release is consistent with democratic values.**

A democratic society must provide opportunities for its citizens to rise and achieve to the best of their abilities, without artificial barriers. A democratic society believes in second chances and utilizes its citizens for their own and society's advantages. It is inconsistent with democratic values to lock up citizens and "throw away the keys." Yet that is what we have been doing in recent years. A democratic society provides a mechanism to evaluate and release those who demonstrate remorse and achieve the ability to function as valuable contributors to our society.

**8. A system of earned release is morally right.**

How can we believe in justice, mercy, forgiveness, and redemption by banishing forever those who commit crimes? Punishment without rehabilitation is inhumane. A society that preaches forgiveness and redemption must provide opportunities for forgiveness and redemption to all of its citizens. ■

# Earned Release: Frequently Asked Questions:

**Q: Under the present system, can't people who are dangerous be kept locked up when their original sentence is up?**

A: Only if their behavior while incarcerated constitutes a crime and they are prosecuted and convicted for it. The fact is that almost all bad behavior in prison results in segregation time and other punishment that might affect a few

***"When rehabilitated inmates are able to return to their families, the benefits are enormous."***

years of "good time" but does not result in additional criminal charges, either because the behavior is not criminal or because the system does not have the evidence for successful convictions. So the answer is: except in a few very exceptional cases, dangerous persons cannot be held beyond their original sentences. A parole system, on the other hand, has the ability to keep locked up those prisoners who continue to present a danger to society.

**Q: Won't a system of earned release cost a lot of money if we have to provide education and job training, plus more parole officers for prisoners?**

A: Not in the long run. The additional upfront cost for education and job programs and more parole officers will be more than offset by savings resulting from fewer permanent prisoners, saved space, a safer society, and more productive former prisoners.

**Q: Under the current system, dangerous prisoners can be sentenced to life terms. Why isn't this sufficient to protect society?**

A: The current system is both over-inclusive and under-inclusive:

- Over-inclusive because it forever locks up people who are capable of feeling remorse, turning their lives around and becoming productive citizens, along with those who are not.
- Under-inclusive because it fails to account for the in-prison behavior of people with shorter sentences who will leave prison without having changed their attitudes and will continue to be a threat to society.

***"A democratic society must provide opportunities for its citizens to rise and achieve to the best of their abilities."***

*Look what else we are doing:* prisons are dangerous places where inmates are given no incentive for good behavior or tools to turn their lives around. Staff is stretched thin, stressed out and at times in danger. Those who don't have life sentences get out of prison at best unskilled and a drain on society and at worst a danger to others. Prisoners' families become poorer, unstable and dysfunctional. Prisoners' former neighborhoods become poorer and more unstable. Our culture is more inhumane and less democratic.

Weigh the options and decide if the benefits of our current system outweigh the detriments. ■

C

### Citizens

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

Get on our Mailing List  
Fill out the IPT Insert

E

### Earned

Be the change you want to see in the world.

- Ghandi

Show Up  
Attend the next CER Meeting

R

### Release

America is the land of second chance and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.

- George W. Bush

Contact Your Legislator  
[www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov)

[www.ILCER.org](http://www.ILCER.org)

*Help CER convince lawmakers to enact a system of earned release. Earned release will better protect society, encourage rehabilitation, save millions and is consistent with democratic values*

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