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# Lifers' Unlimited Club Newsletter Oregon State Penitentiary

Chartered 1968  
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*"The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves and wiser people so full of doubts."*

Bertrand Russell

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## New Mail Rules in Pennsylvania May Spread Nationwide

By Suzy Subways  
 From *Prison Health News*

On September 5<sup>th</sup>, after a 12-day lockdown of all 25 prisons in the state, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections made drastic permanent changes to mail and visits. The DOC claimed that dozens of guards had been exposed to synthetic drugs, and that the lockdown and new restrictions were intended to protect them. But no tests showed that the drugs were in the sick officers' bodies. Toxicology experts and the medical directors of the hospital emergency rooms where the guards were taken told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that the guards' symptoms were consistent with anxiety. They called it a "mass psychogenic illness" – anxiety symptoms that can happen when groups of people share a contagious fear of being exposed to something, even though they haven't been. No mailroom staff reported getting sick.

Governor Tom Wolf and DOC Secretary John Wetzel announced a contract with a private company for \$15 million to tighten security. Because the DOC considered it an "emergency," they could sign this contract without hearing competitive bids from other companies or any oversight from the state legislature. All mail for people in Pennsylvania prisons must now be sent to a private company in Florida called Smart Communications. This company scans the mail electronically and emails it to the prison, which prints a copy for the recipient. The originals – letters, greeting cards, photos, and children's art – are destroyed.

The Electronic version of all mail is converted to searchable text and kept in a database. This means the DOC can search for key words to find information about people in prison and their loved ones. As the Smart Communications website states, "Converting your inmate postal mail to electronic media, allows for a searchable database of inmate mail and opens a whole new field of intelligence for your agency...Eliminate the last form of undocumented, uncontrolled communication."

Continued on page 2

## Mission Statement

The purpose of the Lifers' Unlimited Club is to unite the incarcerated men of OSP with a goal of improving the quality of life for those inside and outside of these walls. The club will work with charity programs, informational services, youth speaking panels and other positive programs. We cannot change the past, however, we believe through rehabilitation and pro-social behavior we can create a more productive future.

### New mail rules...

Continued from page 1

Legal mail is photocopied in front of the recipient, who is given the copy. But the prison keeps the original for 45 days. Many lawyers have stopped sending mail to their clients because of the new policy, which has delayed people's ability to prepare for court and caused them to miss court deadlines. The Pennsylvania ACLU, Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, Abolitionist Law Center and Amistad Law Project have filed as federal First Amendment lawsuit against the policy.

Visitors now go through body scanners and cannot access food or water during the visit, due to a three-month ban on vending machines. Major Tillery, a currently incarcerated writer, reports, "Not being able to get vending food and drink prevents visits from children, older people, and people with medical problems. That is the point. This is an attack on the social values of Black families." This echoes a growing national trend of prison systems replacing in-person visits with video visits.

At first, the new policy required all books to be bought directly from the DOC as expensive E-books and read on tablets that cost \$155.00. All of the restrictions hurt people in solitary confinement the most. Loved ones of people in Pennsylvania prisons have organized several days of phone calls to elected officials and the DOC secretary to object to the restrictions. Currently incarcerated activists have written op-eds in local newspapers, and activists outside have organized several demonstrations in Philadelphia and Harrisburg. In response to this pressure from the community, the DOC reversed its book policy and will now allow books to be sent by publishers, bookstores and free book donation programs and publications such as *Prison Health News* will not be scanned and monitored electronically, but they must be sent to a security processing center in central Pennsylvania, which will forward them to the subscribers.

More than half of the \$80 billion the United States spends every year on prisons goes to private companies. Secretary Wetzel is president of the Association of State Correctional Administrators, which holds conferences that private contractors pay to attend so they can lobby elected officials for contracts. These contracts for phone services, tablet computers, video visitation, email, e-books, and more also mean kickbacks for the DOC. The Human Rights Defense Center obtained the Pennsylvania DOC's contracts for mail processing and tablets from Smart Communications, GTL, and JPay. In February, the amount of money the state receives every month as a percentage of what incarcerated people pay for things like e-books, music, games, and email was reduced by almost a third. The DOC would only get a higher percentage if people had to buy more products for their tablets – for example, if other options for communication were limited.

Pennsylvania's new restrictions also please the PA State Corrections Officers Association, which has been unhappy about reforms to solitary confinement. Activists in prison and outside have protested for human rights and won some victories, but the security departments of the DOC seek to re-assert their control. Governor Wolf supported these repressive mail policies, in part, to win the support of the guards' union while running for re-election this November.

Pennsylvania is the first state to dramatically limit mail in prisons, but most states eventually want to eliminate postal mail entirely. It's important to keep track of your prison system's policies and when they might change. Be forewarned if an emergency situation is declared – this may be a way to put dramatic changes in place without oversight. But remember, these changes can be reversed. ✕



#### Option #1

BBQ CHICKEN

#### Option #2

Pepperoni & Sausage



#### Option #3

Mushroom & Olives

#### Option #4

Canadian Bacon /  
Pineapple



## **ATTENTION**

**Please pay close attention to the delivery dates below.**

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**If you move to a different Block,  
The system will follow you, and depending  
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**NO REFUNDS UNLESS TRANSFERED**

## **Limit One Per Person**

**One large two-topping pizza delivered directly to  
your cell for \$15.00**

**Send your CD-28 to the Activities Section(lifers')  
account #2518. Include your pizza option.**

**OPEN TO ALL BLOCKS AND NCI LEVELS**

**All CD-28s must be in, and cleared by FEBUARY 20th**

**If you, your friends, or family are experiencing difficulty with the Telmate system,  
the official Telmate Customer Service Number is: 866-516-0115**

## **Pope Francis On Prison Reform: “We will be judged on this.”**

**By Cindy Wooden – Catholic News Service**

(The Lifers' Unlimited Club does not endorse any religion or religious organization.)

Visiting the imprisoned is an act of mercy that has implications for all Christians and not just those involved in prison ministry, Pope Francis said.

Speaking Nov. 8 to participants at a meeting of international and regional directors of Catholic prison ministries, Pope Francis urged greater efforts to reform prison systems, address the root causes of crime and insure acceptance and reintegration once a person completes his or her sentence.

“The whole church in fidelity to the mission received from Christ” is called to show the most vulnerable people the mercy of God, the pope said. “We will be judged on this.”

While not arguing against all prison sentences, Pope Francis urged Catholics to reflect on sentencing guidelines and the motivations behind them to ensure they do not promote “a throwaway culture.”

“Many times,” he said, societies “in a supposed search for good and for security, seek the isolation and imprisonment of those who act against social norms,” believing that locking them up is “the ultimate solution to the problems of community life.”

In that way, he said, people think it “is justified that large amounts of public resources are destined to repress offenders instead of truly seeking to promote the integral development of people, which reduces the circumstances that favor committing illegal acts.”

“It is easier to repress than to educate and, I would say it is more comfortable too,” Pope Francis told the group. “Denying the injustice present in society and creating these spaces to put offenders is easier than offering equal development opportunities to all citizens.”

The aim of a prison sentence should be to educate and prepare people to return eventually to society as law-abiding and contributing citizens, he said, but that often is not the case because of a lack of “resources to address the social, psychological and family problems experienced by detainees.”

“You cannot talk about paying a debt to society from a jail cell without windows,” Pope Francis said. “There is no humane punishment without a horizon. No one can change their life if they don’t see a horizon. And so many times we are used to blocking the view of our inmates.”

“Take this image of the windows and the horizon,” the pope told the prison ministers, “and ensure that in your countries the persons always have a window and horizon; even a life sentence – which for me is questionable – even a life sentence would have to have a horizon,” a way of offering hope to the inmate.

A related area that requires much more attention from the church and its members, he said, is helping people after they have been released from prison.

“Often when leaving prison, the person finds himself in a world that is alien to him and that does not recognize him as trustworthy, even excluding him from the possibility of working to obtain a decent livelihood,” the pope said. “By preventing people from regaining the full exercise of their dignity,” they are exposed again to the lack of opportunity that often contributed to their committing a crime in the first place.

Pope Francis concluded his talk by sharing a story he has told before about driving to or past a prison near Buenos Aires and seeing the line of people waiting outside to visit an inmate.

Particularly striking were the mothers of the detainees who would arrive early and “undergo often humiliating security checks,” he said. “These women were not ashamed that the whole world saw them. ‘My son is there’ and they showed their faces for their sons.”

“May the church learn motherhood from these women and learn the gestures of motherhood that we must have for our brothers and sisters who are detained,” the pope said. ✕

**Have a laugh...**



Halfway through a romantic dinner, the husband smiled and said, “You look so beautiful under these lights.” The wife was falling in love all over again until he added, “We *gotta* get some of these lights.”

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**What’s the difference between an outlaw and an in-law?  
Outlaws are wanted.**

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“Why did you leave your last job?”

“It was something my boss said.”

“What did he say?”

“You’re fired!”

## Lifer's Brain Change Panel ATTENTION FELLOW LIFERS

My name is Shawn Freitag; I have been in prison going on 32 years. Some of you know me, others don't. For those who don't know me, you could say I am a rights activist. For close to 10 years, off and on, I was a legal assistant at SRCL.

So let's get to the point. Were you sentenced to prison when you were below the age of 25? If you were, there have been changes in laws and scientific breakthroughs regarding the brain chemistry of young men and women. Studies have proven that the male brain does not fully mature until 25 years old, and in females until 22 years of age.

Why should you care? Well, a person who fits this criterion is not fully responsible for the choices he or she has made before this maturation occurs, and in a court of law he or she must be treated differently than other criminal defendants.

For a person below the age of 17 and charged with Aggravated Murder (ORS 163.095) was excluded from the death penalty and possibly life without parole. This is extremely important being that most of us were coerced with the threat of the death penalty into pleading guilty and taking life without parole sentences. If you were excluded from these penalties, the D.A. could not coerce you with the threat of these possibilities.

I want to know who would be interested in a legal panel designed to understand the results of these studies and the laws revolving around it. The panel would be named, Lifer's Brain Change Panel. The criteria would be centered on those whom this affects.

Please write the Lifers' Unlimited Club to express your interest in this.

Thank you, my fellow lifers.

Shawn Freitag

# LIFERS' CLUB COFFEE



•Drip Cone: \$6.00

•Coffee Filters: \$6.00

## \$7.00 Coffee

- French Vanilla
- Blue Berry Cobbler
- NEC Choc. Cappuccino

## 1Pound Bags

- Death Wish \$25.00
- Dutch Bros \$17.00



**Folgers Premium  
Dark 1850  
12oz \$10.00  
BLACK GOLD**

## \$10.00 Coffee

- Kauai Coconut Car. Crunch
- SB Morning Joe DARK
- SB Pike Place Med. Roast
- SB Colombia
- Toasted Hazelnut - 8 Left
- SB Espresso
- SB Sumatra Dark 12oz
- SB Caramel 12oz
- SB Verona Dark (DECAF)
- Folgers Premium Dark

***Please submit separate cd-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430***



## Leadership Notes

### Character Without Condescension

Character may be the most important element of leadership. People want to know that they can trust you to shoot straight with them. They need to know that what you tell them to do is for the benefit of the organization, and not some personal agenda that only benefits you, or that is designed to benefit you personally more than anyone else. If the leader of an organization is using his position for his own benefit, or is just plain corrupt, those who follow will likely also become corrupt.

As a leader you need to know that the people in your organization will do what is best for the organization and follow your instructions; if they don't, you will ultimately lose control of the organization. So, assuming that the need for character integrity is understood, I will get on to the point I want to make here.

I once worked for a man whose integrity was above reproach. He wouldn't even take an ink pen home that didn't belong to him. If he did, you could bet your last dollar that he would be sure to pay for it. The problem was that if *you* took a pen home without paying for it, you were a no-good thief and absolutely untrustworthy in his eyes.

This extremism extended to things like following proper procedure. If there was a proscribed process by which something was to be done, you'd better follow it to the letter, or you were "cheating the company!"

Most people cut a corner here and there along the way. As long as the need is met and the job is done, what's the big deal? Demonstrating good character is obviously a commendable trait, but when we lord it over someone, because we are so much better than they are because *we would never do what they do*, well, now we are just being an asshole.

Even if you are absolutely one hundred percent in the right, each one of us is at different stages of their path, and we need to make allowances for those who are not at the same place as we are. As long as they are getting their jobs done, and not ripping off the organization, get over it and get on with life.



Option #1

BBQ CHICKEN

Option #2

Pepperoni & Sausage

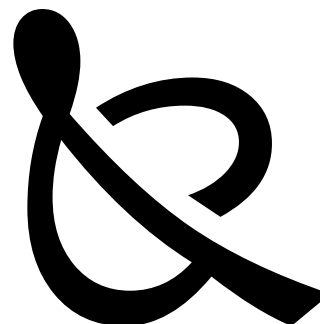


Option #3

Mushroom & Olives

Option #4

Canadian Bacon /  
Pineapple



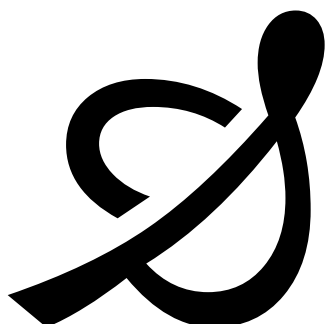
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# LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS

On Going Sales of Replacement heads: 2 pk

**\$11.00**

**Per 2pk**

**NO REFUNDS UNLESS TRANSFERED**



**StarBucks Holiday Blend**

**StarBucks Pumpkin Spice**

**StarBucks Peppermint Mocha**

**StarBucks Golden S'mores Blonde**

**Cameron's Toasted Southern Pecan** **10-Left**

**White Choc. Peppermint Mocha** **10-Left**

**\$10.00**

**LIMITED SUPPLY**

# LIFERS' UNLIMITED CLUB

➤ Maple Bacon \$15.00 (2 left)

➤ Red Velvet \$15.00 (2 left)

➤ Wht, Russian \$15.00 (5 left)

➤ PB & Jelly \$15.00 (4 left)

➤ Mustachio \$15.00 (3 left)

**Big Train Drink Mix**

- Cookies n Cream (3)
- White Chocolate (2)
- Orange Cream (5)
- Caramel Latte (1)
- Chocolate Mint (1)

**SALE PRICE**

**SALE PRICE**

**\$23.00**

**3.5 lb Bag**

**This is the last of the  
Bones Coffee and the Drink Mix.**

***Please submit separate cd-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430***

# LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS

## Frontier Deluxe Veggie Mix

1 Pound Bulk Bag



All-Natural, Kosher **\$18.00**

Non-Irradiated

No Additives

No Preservatives

Certified Gluten Free

Rated 4 out of 5 Stars  
(Carrots, onions, potatoes, peas,  
tomatoes, celery, peppers and beans)

Approximately 5 lb of fresh  
Vegetables per bag!

- 9 Flavor S.S. Liquid Creamers  
Salted Caramel, French Vanilla,  
Italian Sweet Creme, Original,  
Cafe Mocha, Cinnamon Vanilla  
Creme, Vanilla, Caramel, Irish  
Creme, Hazelnut
- No refrigeration needed



**180 prepackaged cups:**  
**\$34.00**

**#2430...NO REFUNDS UNLESS TRANSFERED**

## LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS: BHU FUNDRAISER

**Last of the DaVinci Flavored Syrup**



**Banana Flavor - 8 left**

**Classic Coconut - 7 Left**

**\$10.00**

**Classic Eggnog - 6 Left**

**Classic Gingerbread - 11 Left**

**Classic Irish Cream - 7 Left**

**Butterscotch Caramel - 6 Left**

**Butterscotch Sugar Free - 8 Left**

**Irish Cream sugar Free - 3 Left**

Write your selection on the back of your CD-28  
and Submit to: **Lifers #2430**

**Raspberry, Red Velvet Cake and Mango still available**

## **It could be you**

**The perils of aging in prison**  
**By: K. Gettling**

It seems to me that we as a community need to address the issue of how we treat the ageing: There seems to be a million articles about the ageing prison population nation wide, which, if we even read them, goes in one ear and out the other. But as I get older (and friends do too), I'm starting to notice how the aged and ailing are treated, and I'm starting to dread what is in store for me.

As we grow older the little aches and pains start to pile up and we become susceptible to various ailments, which take longer to heal. The medical treatment is sub par and when legal action becomes necessary to get treatment the medical staff seem to gang up on you as if it's an "us against them" battle. This mentality needs to stop!

We all have different personalities that don't always mesh well; in the free world, if there is an unsolvable issue between medical personnel and patient the patient can go elsewhere. They can also go to social media and let people know what is happening. This probably keeps a lot of bad behavior in check. In here one issue is easily compiled onto another with very little real checks and balances in the system. If you are unlucky enough to have to go outside these walls for treatment often times as soon as you get back, medical personnel change or ignore the prescribed treatment from the outside facility. If you ever get to see those who prescribed the aforementioned treatment and tell them what happened, good luck getting approved for anything else. This mentality isn't limited to staff.

We fellow prisoners, especially those of us doin' a grip, need to recognize how easily it could be us who are ailing. One example is in culinary; today I was eating chow with someone who is on a liquid diet. That in itself is a nasty meal, made nastier by ice-cold chicken broth, and something that could only be guessed at as being unset Jell-O. Prior to that his last three meals were pureed black beans. He couldn't tell the coordinator, as that's tell'n, and tell'n is taboo. But even if he were so inclined, the coordinator would get in the diet cook's ass who will be making the next meal and who knows what kind of retaliation would be incurred? I mean c'mon guys take some initiative: how long is this person going to be on this diet? Is it strictly a liquid diet or can some soft solids be served? What would I like if I were forced to eat this crap? Variety?

Remember some of us got old in here; you may be getting old in here, or will be getting old in here. I'm sure everyone of us has at least one person we know who got old in here or who will be getting old in here, take all that into consideration, because it could so very easily happen to you.

**KAZ**

## **We need to treat each other better**

**By: Michael Wille January 2020**

I was also sitting at the table with Kaz when another friend of ours sat his tray down on the table and asked:

Either of you want any of this shit?

What the fuck is it? I asked.

Cold chicken broth and some kind of Jell-o... I think, was his reply.

I don't even think I was able to answer verbally; I just shook my head in disgust and offered him part of my tray, which he declined.

Sadly, this type of treatment seems to have become the "norm". Is this how we are treating our old and infirmed? Those of us wearing blue not looking out for the others wearing blue? We come to expect being mistreated by one aspect of the machine or another with little recourse, but where did this all come from, this utter lack of respect and discard of civilities amongst ourselves, the residents of this place?

None of us want to be here, none of us want to work the chow line for little or no pay, none of us want a lot of things, but we've all been there, we've all paid our dues.

It was never perfect before, I'm not saying that it was either, but it can be better than it is now. Even the stupid little shit that bugs us that probably shouldn't but still does like cutting the line, any line; where is that coming from? I can appreciate the need to get somewhere in a hurry, but just take a quick look behind you sometime and register the resentment in others eyes when you do such things.

When I talk with other Lifers' about our club and the direction of the club, it always boils down to: "Why doesn't the club do this, or why don't they do that, don't they know the club is supposed to be about us in here?" It's not always about the club or others doing things for us, sometimes we need to do things ourselves, for each other.

I'm old school and come from a long line of solid convicts that mentored me in my youth as to how to do time. Their first rule would be to shut my pie hole and quit complaining if I myself wasn't willing to do or say something about it. I write now and voice my opinion the best way I know how.

Thank you for listening to my rant.

**Wille**



# Membrane Health

Submitted by J.R Oslund

**B**efore the mid 1900's when the electron microscope came into being, the cell membrane looked like a thin layer of Saran Wrap that separated the interior of the outside environment. Since then, the membrane's fascinating structure and roles are gradually being unearthed.

Man is made of trillions of cells, and every single one has a membrane. Not only does the membrane serve as a wall protecting the cell from potential villains, but it also downloads information into the cell. It determines what life-sustaining elements are needed, attracts them, recognizes them and then gives them entrance. For example, consider the cells that make up the inner lining of the small intestine. This is where nutrients from food are absorbed into the body to sustain life. These cells are critically located here to recognize, then select nutrients the body needs and regulate their absorption. Understanding of the membrane's ability to receive, selectively choose and interpret environmental signals, plus its capacity to translate those signals into behavior, has led some researchers to regard it as the "brain" of the cell.

Properly functioning, healthy bodies are reliant upon healthy cells, which in turn are dependent on the cell membrane. "Without a healthy membrane, cells lose their ability to hold water, vital nutrients, and electrolytes. They also lose their ability to communicate with other cells and be controlled by regulating hormones. They simply do not function properly." So how can we ensure healthy cells?

Good nutrition is the best way to ensure that the cell membranes will stay healthy. It just makes sense when you understand what the cell membrane is composed of. Each cell membrane is largely made of millions of phospholipids with protein, cholesterol and carbohydrates interposed here and there. These terms are familiar except for perhaps phospholipids. Phospholipids are simply fatty acids with an attached phosphorus. Since our body is continuously rebuilding itself, it uses the elements from the food we eat to produce new cells.

The phospholipids determine the integrity and fluidity of the cell membrane. Because they are soluble in water and fat, they enable fat-soluble substances like vitamins and hormones to pass in and out of cells. When stimulated by the environment, the lipids serve as precursors to important signaling molecules involved in cell growth and development. They also modulate inflammation.

The fatty acids we eat are incorporated into the cell membranes in all our body tissue as phospholipids. While the cell is programmed to selectively incorporate what fatty acids it needs for optimum function, what determines the type of phospholipids in the cell membrane is the type of fat consumed. Saturated fat, monounsaturated fat, omega-6 polyunsaturated fat and omega-3 polyunsaturated fat are found in varying proportions in whole foods as well as in oils. Within these main categories there are varieties of fatty acids.

Saturated fat has been looked upon as the unhealthy fat. However, cell membranes need fatty acids derived from saturated as well as from unsaturated fats. When researchers looked at the fatty acid composition of the phospholipids in the T-cells (white blood cells), from both young and old donors, they found that a loss of saturated fatty acids in the lymphocytes was responsible for age-related declines in white blood cell function. It takes a balance of both saturated and unsaturated fats, without deficiency or overemphasis, to compose and properly maintain the structure of phospholipids. Coconut is rich in the types of fatty acids that were found to restore T-cell function in this study. Interestingly, not all saturated fatty acids biologically behave the same. Saturated fats as found in cocoa butter, coconut oil, and palm oil can have very different biological consequences than saturated fats from milk and lard. Coconut oil can be useful in cooking as it is stable and does not oxidize at higher temperatures.

Olive oil is rich in monounsaturated fat and antioxidants. As an example of how olive oil can make a difference: researchers found that long-term virgin olive oil consumption modified the fatty acid composition of membranes, which influenced how the proteins which receive and transmit information in the membranes behaved. This was found to positively impact blood sugar status and cardiovascular health in type 2 diabetic individuals. Virgin olive oil was found to normalize the fatty acid composition of cell membranes in healthy and hypertensive persons. Researchers concluded that besides the pharmacological approach to avoid high blood sugars, another way to improve diabetes without the side effects would be to directly alter the membrane's fatty acid composition through diet.

Omega-3 fatty acids are powerful compounds. They have been shown to control inflammation, prevent cancer and protect cells by forming part of the cell membrane. Omega-3 is needed by every cell in the body to function normally. This class of good fats is as essential as vitamins to our health. We know that omega-3 can protect the heart, the lungs, the kidneys, really every organ system that we know of, including the brain. Omega-3 fatty acids (n-3) are significant structural components of the phospholipid membranes of tissues throughout the body and are especially rich in the retina, brain, and spermatozoa.... In the retina, where n-3 fatty acids are especially important, deficiency can result in decreased vision. Vegetarian sources of omega-3s include flaxseeds, flaxseed oil, chia seeds and omega-3 enriched eggs.

Man-made trans fatty acids such as hydrogenated oils, as found in Crisco, many margarines, store bought bread, crackers, cookies and French fries, have very damaging effects on cell membranes. The manufacturing of trans fatty acids literally alters their shape into a form rarely found in nature. Their presence impacts how the membrane functions. Its deleterious presence does worse yet as it displaces the incredibly important, disease-preventing omega-3 fatty acids.

Over-consumed polyunsaturated oils like corn oil are the most easily oxidized fats when subject to heat and air. When fatty acids oxidize they begin to turn rancid. Deep fried foods in restaurants are especially hazardous as oil is reused. A healthier option when sautéing is grape seed oil as it can be heated up to 485 degrees before damage occurs. Consuming a diet rich in whole foods and colorful fruits and vegetables provides the antioxidants that will protect the cell membrane.

The brain of the cell, as well as the brain of our body, needs good fat. For example, supplementing prison inmates' diets with omega-3 fatty acids led to a corresponding decrease in violence. Our modern industrialized diets appear to be changing the very architecture and functioning of the brain. Understanding this will hopefully result in wiser choices. After all, wisdom is the right use or exercise of knowledge. ✕

## How bad is prison healthcare? It depends on who's watching.

From The Marshall Project – Nov. 2019

In late December, federal Magistrate Judge David Duncan waved an iPad in front of his Phoenix courtroom, enraged. He had just read a local news article suggesting that the Arizona Department of Corrections and its for-profit medical provider Corizon Health were gaming a system put in place to ensure adequate health care for the state's prisoners. "There is no other way to read it," he said. "It's just a game to beat the judge and his monitoring program."

Duncan has been overseeing a court case aimed at improving medical and mental health care in Arizona prisons. *Parson v. Ryan*, which began in 2012, accuses the state of providing health care so shoddy that it amounts to cruel and unusual punishment: delayed or denied treatment, too few doctors and nurses, referrals and medication refills that fall through the cracks.

Corizon has served as Arizona's prison health care provider since 2013. The company is not a defendant in the ongoing legal action, the plaintiffs wrote in a court filing, because the state is ultimately responsible for providing care "regardless of who it hires." However, the company's care lies at the heart of the proceedings.

In 2014, Arizona arrived at an agreement with the prisoners that explicitly says that government officials "deny all the allegations." The state also committed to meeting 103 standards governing everything from how quickly prescriptions are filled to how often those with mental illness see a counselor. Part of the agreement was that the state would measure how well it was meeting the standards and report the results back to the court.

For the first few years, according to the state's own reports, it did not go well. Among other problems, the state was not providing urgent medication or specialty care quickly enough and prison doctors weren't reviewing discharge orders for sick prisoners returning from the hospital. "You fundamentally have an obligation to provide these services to these inmates," Duncan said at a 2016 hearing. "You failed to do it." At one point the judge called the reports "chilling."

Now the local news report seemed to indicate that the situation was even worse than the state described.

Under the terms of the Arizona lawsuit, the state must ensure that patients who are referred to specialists see them within 30 days. But the story, by NPR station KJZZ, included an account by a physician who said Corizon asked her to cancel referrals if they weren't completed in that time frame to avoid fines from the court. "After 30 days we get nailed for 1,000 bucks a day until they are seen," read an email from a Corizon employee to the physician.

Martha Harbin, a spokesperson for Corizon, told the Marshall Project that Corizon would disprove all of the claims made by KJZZ at an upcoming court hearing. The employee "acted appropriately," Harbin said. "The email was taken out of context and its meaning distorted by Watson and KJZZ" Officials at the Arizona Department of Correction did not respond to several emails with detailed lists of questions.

Harbin said the company is failing to meet only a small fraction of the standards under the lawsuit and that those failures result from how difficult it is to hire staff in Arizona. In an email, she detailed the company's extensive efforts to recruit and train staff. "If staffing penalties were merely the cost of doing business, we certainly wouldn't be finding this level of HR activity," she said.

Corizon, based in Brentwood, TN., is one of the nation's largest for-profit prison healthcare providers, with contracts in 30 local jails and eight state corrections systems, according to Harbin.

Allegations of mismanagement and poor patient care have recently caused Corizon to lose some high profile and lucrative contracts. The company has been the target of thousands of lawsuits – including other large-scale class action suits ongoing in Idaho and Alabama.

Any prison or prison-based provider is inevitably going to be a target for legal action, in part because the courts are often prisoner's only means of redress for grievances large and small. What's striking about the recent cases, however is their similarities.

The suits describe a multi-layered bureaucracy in which even routine medical referrals require approval from middle management; a crisis-level shortage of nurses, doctors, psychiatrists, and other medical staff; and serious but treatable illnesses that went untreated and turned deadly. The Arizona claim described a 59-year-old inmate who died after nurses "repeatedly ignored his desperate pleas for help...even after open weeping lesions [on his body] were swarmed by flies." A handwritten "notice of impending death" was filed by an inmate whose cancer went untreated. He wrote in August, "Now because of their delay, I may be lucky to be alive for 30 days." x

**"There is no other way to read it," he said. "It's just a game to beat the judge and his monitoring program."**

# The Practical Case for Parole for Violent Offenders

The New York Times

By Marc Morje Howard

The American criminal justice system is exceptional, in the worst way possible: It combines exceptionally coercive plea bargaining, exceptionally long sentences, exceptionally brutal prison conditions and exceptionally difficult obstacles to societal re-entry.

This punitive-ness makes us stand out as uniquely inhumane in comparison with other industrialized countries. To remedy this, along with other changes, we must consider opening the exit doors – and not just for the “easy” cases of nonviolent drug offenders. Yes, I’m suggesting that we release some of the people who once committed serious, violent crimes.

There’s widespread agreement that current practices are unsustainable. The United States is home to 5 percent of the world’s population, yet has 25 percent of the world’s prisoners. The grim reality of American justice is that there are 2.3 million people behind bars, five million on parole or probation, 20 million with felony convictions and over 70 million with a criminal record.

That’s why sentencing reform – mainly consisting of reduced penalties for drug-related crimes – has received bipartisan support at both the federal and state levels. But this isn’t enough. We should also bring back discretionary parole – release before a sentence is completed – even for people convicted of violent crimes if they’ve demonstrated progress during their imprisonment.

Other democracies regularly allow such prisoners to be granted reduced sentences or conditional release. But in the United States the conversation about this commonsense policy became politicized decades ago. As a result, discretionary parole has largely disappeared in the most states and was eliminated in the federal system.

Prisoners whose sentences include a range of years -- such as 15 to 25 years, or 25 years to life – can apply to their state’s parole board for discretionary parole, but they almost always face repeated denials and are sent back to wither away behind bars despite evidence of rehabilitation.

Rejection is usually based on the “nature of the crime,” rather than an evaluation of a person’s transformation and accomplishments since they committed it. The deeper reason for the rejection of discretionary requests is simple: fear. Politicians and parole board members are terrified that a parolee will commit a new crime that attracts negative media attention.

But this fear-driven thinking is irrational, counterproductive and inhumane. It bears no connection to solid research on how criminals usually “age out” of crime, especially if they have had educational and vocational opportunities while incarcerated. It permanently excludes people who would be eager to contribute to society as law-abiding citizens, while taxpayers spend over \$30,000 a year to house each prisoner. This deprives hundreds of thousands of people of a meaningful chance to earn their freedom.

But are prisoners who have served long sentences for violent crimes genuinely capable of reforming and not re-offending? The evidence says yes. In fact, only about 1 percent of people convicted of homicide are arrested for homicide again after their release. Moreover, a recent “natural experiment” in Maryland is very telling. In 2012, the state’s highest court decided that Maryland juries in the 1970s had been given faulty instructions. Some defendants were retried, but many others accepted plea bargains for time served and were released. As a result, about 150 people who had been deemed the “worst of the worst” have been let out of prison – and none has committed a new crime or even violated parole.

This outcome may sound surprising, but having spent one afternoon a week for the past three years teaching in a maximum-security prison in Maryland, I’m not shocked at all. Many of the men I teach would succeed on the outside if given the chance. They openly recognize their past mistakes, deeply regret them and work every day to grow, learn and make amends. Many of them are serving life sentences with a theoretical chance of parole, but despite submitting thick dossiers of their accomplishments in prison along with letters of support from their supervisors and professors, they are routinely turned down.

Over the past several years, I have brought in hundreds of Georgetown students for tours that include a meeting with a panel of prisoners, and I have accompanied nearly 50 academic colleagues who have delivered lectures to my incarcerated students. Without fail, the things that stand out to visitors are the same things that haunt me: the compassion, engagement and intellect of people who made terrible mistakes long ago but should not be perpetually defined by the worst thing they’ve ever done.

Until recently the political situation was favorable to bipartisan criminal justice reform. But the election of a self-described “law and order candidate,” the doubling of the stock prices of private-prison companies and the return of the discredited war on drugs gives an indication of the direction of the current administration.

But whenever a real discussion about reform does come, policy makers should look beyond the boundaries of the United States. To be clear, I am not suggesting that all long-term prisoners should be released nor that the perspectives of crime victims should be ignored. Serious crimes warrant long sentences. But other democracies provide better models for running criminal justice and prison systems. Perhaps we could learn from them and acquire a new mind-set – one that treats prisons as sites to temporarily separate people from society while creating opportunities for personal growth, renewal and eventual re-entry of those who are ready for it. ✕

Marc Morje Howard is the director of the Prisons and Justice Initiative at Georgetown, where he is a professor of government and law, and is the author of *Unusually Cruel: Prisons, Punishment and the Real American Exceptionalism*.

**Lifers' Unlimited Club  
Executive Body**

**President:** Robert Kelley  
**Vice President:** Brian Waybrant  
**Secretary:** Troy Ramsey  
**Treasurer:** Bill Knepper  
**Facilitator:** Stephen Weavill

# Proposal Updates

Proposal	Status
Food Truck	Pending
Gaming Console rentals	Pending
Out of the Darkness suicide prevention	Approved
Krispy Kream fundraiser	Approved
Pizza / Cookies fundraisers for 2020	Approved

## Lifers' Unlimited Club Meeting Minutes

**For January 14, 2019**

**Troy Ramsey, Secretary**

Hey fellows,

Here are as few notes from our *Out Of The Darkness (suicide prevention)* meeting. Our guest's speakers were Don, Shelia & Ryan. There was a walk for suicide prevention at OSCI where families were allowed to walk with AIC's. *Talks Saves Lives* - AIC's get a chance to send out a message on prevention. At the end of every walk they have what is called a color ceremony, which gives AIC's the opportunity to pick different color bracelets for where they're at in their walk. CCCF sent bracelets to OYA on the last Sunday in August 2019. OYA is getting ready for their first walk. Last year was the 4<sup>th</sup> year doing suicide prevention walks in ODOC. Looking to coordinate a walk here at OSP in the near future.

**JAIL/PRISON TOURS:** Families are always asking about ways they can assist us here in prison, this is one way you're families can get involved. Tell them to go to <https://tinyurl.com/yyz60yys> and sign "Justice Transparency Week" petition sponsored by the Global Justice Resource Center. Open jails & prisons for annual tours by judges & citizens.

Also Challenging Life Sentences Conference was videoed by Alan Pogue, the director of media since CURE began in Texas almost fifty years ago. Plans for the video are that it will be 30 minutes and anyone can access it from a link. January is the due date and email [cure@curenational.org](mailto:cure@curenational.org) and asking to receive a notice when it is ready to be accessed.

**SECRETARY,**

**TROY**

### Announcements/Upcoming Events

#### 2020 Meeting Dates

February 13<sup>th</sup> ..... CURE  
 March 12<sup>th</sup> ..... Legal Seminar  
 April 9<sup>th</sup> ..... Eating Contest?  
 May 14<sup>th</sup> ..... Animal Shelter  
 June 11<sup>th</sup> ..... Nominations  
 July 9<sup>th</sup> ..... Elections  
 August 13<sup>th</sup> ..... 1<sup>st</sup> Banquet  
 September 10<sup>th</sup> ..... 2<sup>nd</sup> Banquet  
 October 8<sup>th</sup> ..... General Meeting  
 November 12<sup>th</sup> ..... Fundraiser  
 December 10<sup>th</sup> ..... Holiday party

«Name»

«Cell»

If you keep on doing what you've  
always done

You'll keep on getting what  
you've always got.

It was Einstein who said that  
doing the same thing over and  
over while expecting a different  
result is the definition of insanity.

Don't be crazy.