

MARYLAND CURE

Maryland CURE
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Legislation Affecting Lifers

Many lifers in Maryland are deserving of a second chance in life. A lot of them had not committed the crime themselves but were sentenced to life under the charge of felony murder. Many had been convicted as juveniles and are simply not the same individuals that they were as teens. Many have rehabilitated themselves, had passed the psychological exams and been recommended for release and parole by the Parole Commission.

For the last three years, legislation has been sponsored to remove the Governor from the approval process for the parole for lifers. The only legislation that has passed so far was to give the Governor 180 days after the parole recommendation to make his decision. This at least forces him to look at the records. Unfortunately, only two lifers were released this year.

Once again this year, legislation is being put forth to take the Governor out of the approval process of lifers convicted of felony murder or convicted as a juvenile. We urge you to write to your Delegate and Senator requested that they support this legislation. To find out your State elected officials, click <http://mdelect.net/> and enter your address. See page 2 for a sample message to use.

Approval of this legislation will improve the quality of our justice system. Since it costs \$33,000 a year to house an inmate in Maryland, the release of deserving lifers will free up financial resources that can be used much more effectively elsewhere.

Most of the Maryland prisons have lifer organizations comprised of lifers that are parole eligible. The Lifer's Conference at MCIH has been particularly active. On November 8th, they sponsored an all-day Community Forum and invited a number of outside speakers to attend (see picture →). Our Treasurer, Mary Pat, attended and was very impressed with the program. Senator Shank also attended

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The Lifer's Conference handed out a 23-page "Lifer Informational Packet." The following message was on the first page:

Upon entering the Division of Corrections decades ago, we (parole eligible lifers) were told that if we followed the rules, stayed out of trouble, and strove to improve ourselves, our efforts would be acknowledged and that we'd eventually be given a second chance to live at liberty in the bands of society. This advice stipulated long ago, has been our beacon light and singular hope, guiding us through the loss and deprivation, the hardship and forlornness of long term incarceration. Our having heeded this advice for many years only to be told later that such efforts (insofar as Maryland's criminal justice system is concerned) goes for naught, shock the conscience and flies in the face of fundamental fairness.

The group also handed out a booklet with resume's/stories of these lifers. Most included a picture of the lifer with family members showing that these are real people deserving a second chance.

Well done MCIH Lifer's Conference!

Lea's Corner – a message from Lea and an update on our advocacy efforts on your behalf!

In October the founders of CURE, Charlie & Pauline Sullivan received a 10 year service award by the Justice Roundtable in D.C. We all appreciate and thank them!

On October 24, Sentencing Project(OSI) held a panel discussion on " Life Sentencing In America", with Walter Lomax(MRJI),Ashley Nellis(Sentencing Project), Tracy Velazquez(Justice Policy),Nancy Mullane(reporter & author of Life after Murder).

The Extra Legalese Group (ELG) freedom of speech case was heard in November and a ruling is pending. In this unprecedented case, ELG members contend that prisoners can meaningfully contribute to the conversation about crime reduction

Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy public comments took place on Dec 11 and Maryland CURE addressed issues of adolescents being incarcerated with adults and removing the Governor from the parole process.

Sample Message to Legislators

Dear (insert name of your representative)

I encourage you to sponsor, cosponsor, and/or support legislation to remove the Governor from the approval process on these two situations:

1. Minors who were sentenced to parole eligible life sentences; and
2. Those convicted under the felony murder statute, where mitigating circumstances establish they were not the primary in committing the crime.

By doing so you will give these men and women a meaningful chance of regaining their freedom, some of whom have served 20, 30, and in some cases 40 years or more incarcerated. This will not only save the taxpayers of Maryland millions of dollars from warehousing these individuals, but could add to its tax base by having them gainfully employed.

It cost the state of Maryland approximately \$33,000 a year to house most prisoners, as oppose to \$1,422 per person on parole. As a taxpayer, and voter in the State of Maryland, and as a leader of an organization comprised of Maryland voters and taxpayers, I encourage you to act on these important issues.

Legislation on these two issues was introduced in 2012 and went to Committee Hearings; however the vote was never taken. Please bring these issues back for the 2013 legislative cycle.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter,

Tips on How to Manage Personal Anger from Incarcerated Fold in Sing-Sing, NY

1. When threatened, do I think before I react?
2. When the situation permits, do I talk myself into a nonviolent response in advance?
3. Do I look the other person in the eye and appeal to her reason?
4. If appealing to reason won't work, do I surprise the other person by doing or saying something unexpected to bring the person back to a reasoning consciousness?
5. Do I forget about not liking a person?
6. Do I put myself in the other person's shoes and speak to his best self?
7. Do I hold on to my understanding that I am a good person and apply it to the other person?
8. Do I refuel to let words upset me and at the same time, watch my own words?
9. Do I allow my environment to dictate who I am?
10. Do I admit that I am partly wrong to give the other person a chance to admit that he is partly wrong too?
11. If I find the other person is right, do I tell her and swiftly end the dispute?
12. Do I let pride make me feel my image will be damaged if I admit I am wrong?
13. While not welcoming hardship or suffering, are there some things I am willing to suffer for, thus winning allies and possibly changing the other person?
14. Do I realize I am never beaten until I quit?
15. When I have to wear down prejudice, do I try over and over until I succeed?
16. Is my final goal to reach a win-win agreement with the other person?
17. Am I ready to practice being positive day after day until it becomes a way of life?

SATA CURE-SORT

This is an Issue CURE Chapter – Sex Abuse Treatment Alliance (SATA) and its program Sex Offenders Restored Through Treatment.

For information, contact:

SATA

Post Office Box 761

Milwaukee, WI 53201-0761

517-482-2085

E-mail: sata@satasort.org, web: www.satasort.org

Video Visitation

On any given day, approximately 2.6 million children have a parent in jail or prison because of the harsh criminal justice policies that have made the United States the world's leading jailer. A growing number of correctional facilities are moving to video visitation because it can be managed by fewer staff than traditional visitation, reduces the chances of contraband being introduced into facilities, and can potentially generate revenue.

Video visitation holds the most potential for benefiting children if:

- It is used as an adjunct to, rather than a replacement for, other modes of communication, particularly contact visits;
- Children can visit from their homes or nearby sites;
- Facility policies allow for frequent visits; and
- Fees are not cost prohibitive.

-- Sentencing Project

Federal Government's Hiring Policies

The Federal Government employs people with criminal records with the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities. Consistent with Merit System Principles, agencies are required to consider people with criminal records when filling positions if they are the best candidates and can comply with requirements. Individuals seeking admission to the civil service must undergo an investigation to establish suitability or fitness for employment.

The principal issues for agencies as they consider hiring people with criminal records involve making determinations related to:

- An individual's character traits and conduct to determine whether employment would or would not protect the integrity and promote the efficiency of the service.
- Whether employment of the individual in the department or agency is consistent with the interests of national security.
- The nature, seriousness, and circumstances of the individual's criminal activity, and whether there has been rehabilitation or efforts toward rehabilitation.

People with criminal records are eligible to work in the vast majority of federal jobs.

Employers -- Federal Income Tax Advantage of Hiring an Ex-felon

Employers can save money on their federal income taxes in the form of a tax credit incentive through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program by hiring ex-felons. An ex-felon under WOTC is an individual who has been convicted of a felony under any statute of the United States or any State, and has a hiring date which is within one year from the date of conviction or release from prison.

The main objective of this program is to enable certified employees to gradually move from economic dependency to self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income and become contributing taxpayers. At the same time, participating employers are compensated by being able to reduce their federal income tax liability. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit program (WOTC) joins other workforce programs that help incentivize workplace diversity and facilitate access to good jobs for American workers.

For each new ex-felon hired, the credit is 25% of qualified first-year wages for those employed at least 120 hours, or \$1,500; and 40% for those employed 400 hours or more, or \$2,400.

There's no limit to the number of "new" ex-felons an employer can hire to benefit from these tax savings. Employers apply for and receive a WOTC certification for each new hire from their State Workforce Agencies. There's minimal paperwork needed to qualify and claim the tax credit.

Spread the word to employers you know!

For More Information: <http://www.doleta.gov/wotc> and <http://www.irs.gov>

Thoughts to Reflect On

When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.

■ Helen Keller

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

■ Anne Frank

Waste no more time arguing what a good person should be. Be one!

■ Marcus Aurelius

Maryland CURE is a Chapter of CURE, a national grass-roots organization dedicated to reducing crime through reform of the criminal justice system.



MD CURE Officers
President Lea Green
Vice President Vivian Penda
Secretary Sharrie Booth
Treasurer Mary Pat DeVerneil
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To All Maryland CURE Members

Second Request! Please send us your annual dues. To save money, we will not be sending out individual notices this year.

- Prisoners \$2 (or 4 stamps)
- Individual \$10
- Family \$15
- Life \$100



**Please note new Maryland CURE mailing address:
Post Office Box 1541 Millersville, MD 21108**



Please remember to send us an email if you're able to receive these newsletters via email. Send to marylandcure@comcast.net

www.marylandcure.webs.com

Next Maryland CURE Meeting
January 26, 2013, Central Branch Library
Columbia, MD
10:30 to 12:30 p.m.

Check website for directions
www.marylandcure.webs.com

The overuse of incarceration, along with the mistaken justifications that have supported this policy, have corrupted and compromised our criminal justice policies and paralyzed efforts to reform them. The net result is an expensive system that relies much too heavily on imprisonment, is increasingly ineffective, and diverts large sums of taxpayers' money from more effective crime and control strategies.

--Unlocking America, JFA Institute

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