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Subject: Politics in prison

Our vets now have the privilege to hold 10 general labor jobs. It took over a year to prove that veterans can have a positive impact on our surroundings. In just a few weeks we have proven our work ethic, discipline and respect toward other inmates, staff and officers.

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We have tilled, prepped and planted a 100 x 50 foot late season garden. Under the watchful eyes of the garden crew and security we completed the task in half the time expected.

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We've taken on the weeding, tilling and watering of all the flower beds in the camp and they are thriving. This relieves pressure on the garden crew so they can remain focused on harvesting vegetables for the local food pantry. Normally all the flowers are dead by now. They thrive for a month and because the garden is so busy, there is no time for watering.

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While the garden crew appreciates our help... many others consider us a threat.

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Many inmates seem to prefer to live in filth. Somehow they think this is a way to get back at the police? This only hurts us, but they don't get it. We're not permitted to go pick up trash ("police call" - in military lingo) which is everywhere, especially on the yards, because it's "someone else's job". BUT they don't pick up the trash in the first place! We make the camp look good - so why oppose us?

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Many staff and officers seem to always go out of their way to "prove" that all inmates are scum and live in filth. So when vets set the bar high, it seems to upset them.

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Many Officers and Staff are vets also. They seem to give us some respect, but it is obvious that Illinois prisons are not about dignity, rehabilitation and being better men. Those that believe our vets are men of dignity will not stand against their fellow officers as this creates friction for themselves.

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On the flip side, many inmates generate more drama than a reality TV show. They think we make them look bad. In many cases it's true and we've seen many workers doing their jobs better.

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It's progress