

DYING RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEIR EYES
WHILE YOUR TAX DOLLARS FLY OUT THE WINDOW

by Francis Soffen

Here I sit dying right in front of the eyes of my captors. It is amazing how they can walk by me with such impunity with no outcry of, "What in the hell is this guy still doing here?" You cannot begin to calculate what it is costing the hard working tax payer to keep me, a 72 year old, wheelchair bound, defenseless man, in prison. I have numerous terminal illnesses, require around the clock intensive care, and need to be rushed to the hospital more & more as of late (and you do not want to know what that costs you!).

The truly foolish aspect of all of this remains that I have been eligible for parole since 1987! That's right the Parole Board can release me any time they want, saving the public untollable tax dollars, but they choose to use my past, a very colorful past at that, to keep me locked up well past my time. Compassionate release is not supposed to be about past crimes or institutional adjustment, it is supposed to be about compassion! When a man like myself, who no longer poses any threat to society, is too ill to have his needs served in the prison environment, then it is incumbent upon society to display its moral conviction, as well as sense of civic frugality, and place me in a care facility that is humane and economically sound.

I have spoken to numerous high ranking prison officials about my situation, and written to even more, and all agree I should be released, many even say they support compassionate/medical release in general, but the sad fact is I still sit here day after day just waiting for the grim reaper to finally show and say, "Frank the bullshit is over and I am here to free you from their hardened hearts." Those words would be kind at this point, but I cannot hope to hear them before I get the message out. During the course of my incarceration I always fought to protect the rights of my brother prisoners. I did a lot for the rights of victims too. I'm not looking for praise, I just want it to be clear that this is not just about me but is also about all the infirm and dying men and women throughout the prison system who are kept warehoused at such high costs when they no longer threaten the safety of the public, as well as for those to come after me, for without change, will be more numerous than the stars in the sky.

Dostoevsky said something along the lines of, "You can judge the level of compassion in any society by how it treats its prisoners." It is time to seek that judgement here in the Commonwealth.

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