

LIKE FLIES ON FECES

By Timothy J. Muise

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It was brought to my attention that the Massachusetts State Police has not had a class of new recruits in going on four (4) years now. Now I am certainly not a fan of the law enforcement industrial complex, and believe that there are other, more socially proven, methods of addressing crime, but if any branch of the law was to be funded with state tax revenues you could make an argument that it would be the state police. They often face the most dangerous situations presented in that field. I tell you all of this because as you may not know the Massachusetts Department of Correction just graduated their fourth class of new recruits in that same time period. The guards around here are like flies on feces.

The Department of Correction (DOC) has a budget of \$520,000,000.00 or so per year and 68% of that budget, or about \$360,000,000.00, goes to salaries alone. The DOC has the third highest paid guards in the nation and the highest staff to prisoner ratio with one (1) employee for every two and a half (2.5) prisoners; and they still call for more and more guards. Now this would not be all that troubling to most if these efforts were reducing crime, but the fact is that Massachusetts has had a 47% percent recidivism rate for several years now (that means that one (1) in two (2) prisoners come back to prison after committing another crime). The rate is indicative of failure - serious failure - and how can we continue to throw funds at a system which disservices the citizenry in such a glaring way? The answer is we cannot.

You recently read in all the major papers about the waste, nepotism, illegalities, and political favors system that was rampant in the Massachusetts Probation Department. Many folks who were involved in that system knew for years just how corrupt it was: donate to a state representative or state senator on a large and continuing basis and you set yourself up for a nice job in the probation department: qualified or not. This was all revealed through an in-depth investigation that probed into all levels of the system: using email records and files which contained the "smoking guns" so to speak. This same type of in-depth investigation needs to be done into the DOC. The skeletons are not buried too deep.

The guards union (MCOFU) has placed such a strangle hold on the system that they now have five (5) sergeants doing what one (1) sergeant used to do, and four (4) lieutenants doing what one (1) used to do. You cannot even calculate how this has increased the financial burden upon you as a taxpayer. It also reduces the number of line guards who staff the buildings where the meager rehabilitative opportunities take place. This means that these buildings are often closed (we joke that prison is closed due to lack of interest - but it is actually not funny at all) and prisoners are left to engage in anti-social, rather than pro-social, behaviors: making the prisoners returning to your streets completely unprepared. This places your family in direct jeopardy.

The guards are abusing sick days, they are manipulating overtime, and the shift swapping scams are allowing them to double up on pensions: all on your dime. The litany of managerial staff is overwhelming and the fat can certainly be cut; and deeply. The public must cry out for an investigation into the DOC so that we can begin to move our society into

the future. Enhancement of public safety can only be fostered by dismantling the draconian DOC operating model, which relies upon being hidden behind prison walls. There has to be a real system of checks and balances, no more nepotism investigative cover-ups, and a thorough review of the crimes and malfeasances must begin as soon as possible in the form of a thorough and comprehensive investigation conducted by truly independent investigators. I would like to see Scott Harshbarger appointed to assemble an investigative team as he has a history of understanding the failures within the system as well as having the courage to rock the boat.

We can no longer tolerate the increase of staffing, like flies on feces, which is destroying any chance for real rehabilitation: it is too costly, morally and socially. The current system stinks like that pile of fly covered feces and it is time to clean it up. Please call your state representative and state senator and ask for an investigation into the malfeasance at the DOC. Call Governor Patrick's office and demand that he immediately appoint Scott Harshbarger, or some other qualified individual, to assemble a team of investigators to address the crimes within his DOC. Demand change! Demand justice! Demand to have your voice heard!

To find out who your local state representative/senator is go to;

<http://www.malegislature.gov/People/FindMyLegislator>
or call
(617) 722-2000

To contact the Governor please call; (617) 725-4005

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