

ILLINOIS GOVERNOR

March 2, 2015

Hello world!

I was so glad to hear all 3 of my recent postings made it! I sent them Nov./Dec. so it's still taking a long time, but I'm just glad they made it.

The newly elected Illinois Governor Rauner has great promise for improving the prison system. He has established a July 1st deadline for all information to be gathered to enact improvements.

First - reduce overcrowding from over 48,000 citizens to the designed capacity of 32,000.

Second - Establish programs to help citizens break the cycle of repeated incarceration, called recidivism in legalese (such as college, trade training, drug rehab and job assistance). And programs instead of prison to help citizens "correct" mistakes before using the destructive force of prison.

Third - Address the issues of high sentences.

I haven't heard anything new about citizens regaining their full rights and clean up past criminal records. It would be the right thing to do and I hope he follows through.

Notice how often I used the word "citizens"? Whenever I have an opportunity to speak with an officer here I try to remind them

that most people here are still "American Citizens".

Unfortunately our U.S. prison system results in citizens being reclassified as "substandard humans" or at the very least "2nd class citizens".

It is true that there are some really scary, sick people too dangerous for normal society. I'd say one percent, five tops, fit this category. Most if given treatment, training, guidance and a fair shot can be productive law-abiding citizens.

But how do you convince 1/4 of a million people whose livelihood and retirement depend upon a big-fat ever bloated prison system?

I think a combination of incentives with a planned reduction of staff. A greater number of employees should come from the military. All Correctional Officers should be given 100% college tuition for a BA/BS degree. It should be expected that this job is a 4-year "tour of duty", a "stepping stone" to a college degree. In 10-years the prison population, prisons and staff can be reduced by half.

This would also result in less animosity against inmates that they are "undeserving" of education and treatment for rehabilitation.

On other news, I've been elected to the position of Post Commander for our GrahamVet group.

It is an honor to have this responsibility. My heart is burdened for the well being of these men. These many broken men are we, striving to remember the better part of who we once were.

Since November we have worked to have a fitting "Memorial Day" service this year. The plans are in place and all permissions given to hold a "Flag Folding" ceremony as at a burial service. We will dedicate our meeting and meal in honor of a veteran who has died or K.I.A. Complete the flag folding and present that in an oak case along with a certificate from GrahamVets.

Not just to honor a veteran, but to teach and help our veterans remember the military traditions of honor we abide by.

We've obtained the 13-fold prayer, and history of the 21-gun salute. We're close to getting 2-flags (1-for practice). Doing a collection and mailing the payment is the tricky part. We're also in need of a CD or tape that plays "taps". As a side bonus it would be great to have a copy of the U.S. Flag Code and the "words" to Taps, maybe the history too.

If anyone out there has any of these things would you consider sending them? If you can, please send to Chaplain Daniel Shreve for GrahamVets. Do not mention my name anywhere ... big trouble ...

On the surface there is nothing wrong or criminal about this, but I have learned there are many officers opposed to our groups success or even existance. So every little thing is used to hinder our efforts.

Fortunately there are some great staff members who support our efforts. Assistant Wardens Ross and Simmons (VSMC-Gulf War), our Chaplain (US Army-Gulf War), C/o J. Stewart (U.S. Army, our Coordinator) and Ms. Amber Sathhoff - PTS Group Therapist. We are making positive steps, however small.

Our GrahamVets Newsletter should begin again in March after a year. I'll send a copy...

Lastly, this is my last envelope. I hate asking for help, but if anyone can resupply my Commissary account I'd really appreciate it.

Until next time ... Out.

Tom D. Cribby