

Ground Breaking Legislative Policy Hearing at SCI Dallas

I want to update everyone on the amazing event we held at SCI Dallas. 4 men serving life without parole (LWOP) sentence and 1 sentenced to 20-40 yrs were all selected by the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus to give testimony on the subjects of parole for lifers, criminal justice reform and prison reform. Most people don't care about the deplorable conditions that all prisoners are forced to live in. The State Reps & Senators were amazed at the conditions of this prison that really needs to be closed down. But let me get back to the point of this post.

On August 22, 2018, approx. 20 Pennsylvania State Reps & 3 State Senators entered SCI Dallas for a legislative policy hearing. Prisoners chosen to testify were Robert Pezzeca, Bryant Hudgins, Jamar Sowell, John Bower, and Rahmee Green. Each prisoner gave unique testimony about their own situation and the situation of others, how lwop sentences are ineffective and how elderly prisoners in Pa have no recourse for a 2nd chance. Upon completion of the hearing, Senators John Blake and Lisa Boscola both pledged their support for the parole for lifers legislation submitted by senator Sharif Street (bill SB942). These politicians engaged us lifers, held conversations, asked questions, gave us very informative answers. We now believe that our lawmakers will honestly begin working on the issues. Too many politicians are learning the issues. I am in no way ever excusing my crime, I took a man's life, but human beings change, they grow, some are worthy of a 2nd chance. Pa Attorney General, Josh Shapiro, stated that in order to gain his vote for commutation you must have the district attorneys support from the committing county and the victims family's support or he will deny you. I was convicted in Bucks Co. That D.A., Matthew Weintraub, has stated he will never support any lifer for commutation, so right there the process has become flawed with a D.A. who has become so prejudiced that he won't even listen or keep an open mind. I sit here today and tell you that I am not the same kid I was when I came to prison, I am not my worst mistake. I believe that when it can be proven that people cannot change, then until that day, life imprisonment is not the answer.

I wish to publicly thank the following: State Rep. Dorria Bullock, such an amazing woman, Ms. Geraye Charnel, executive director of the Pa LBC, And my friend Thomas Young, chief of staff to state rep. Bullock, without those 3, the policy hearing would not have happened. Outside testifiers were: Elizabeth Geyer, paroled lifer Bobby Harris, Brooke McCarthy (attorney for the juvenile law center), Keir Bradford-Grey (Chief defender, phila. defenders association) and

Titus Moolathara, former D.O.C. employee who now runs the phila. public free library. State Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski wants to work with us lifers in order to start a mentor program to mentor to kids who are on the verge of ruining their lives. The Pa DOC does not want kids to avoid places like this, we are job security and the new generation of prisoners is future job security for their children. Though he was invited, the Secretary of Corrections couldn't even be bothered to show up for this historic hearing. If he truly meant when he stated that he wants to change how Pa corrections is ran, he would have been here. But so far, he hasn't made any positive changes yet, its only been a few years since he made that promise, maybe he will in the future.

As a Pennsylvania resident/taxpayer, did you know that the state is over \$60 Billion dollars in DEBT? When prison guards, who sleep half the day away in here, are able to make \$100 grand or more a year, there is a problem.

But feel free to ask Sec. John Wetzel about the cost of opening SCI Phoenix. Staff were making over \$50 an hour working 12 hour shifts but being paid for 16 hours, how does that happen? The opening of SCI Phoenix was a complete disaster and cost the state millions in staff overtime.

But now moving on to the current epidemic. Every Pennsylvania prison is on lockdown because in another jail someone was trying to get K2 smuggled in through the mail. Simple fix, wear rubber gloves, as you are supposed to, when processing mail. If staff had been doing their jobs in the right way, none of this would have happened. Inmates are going to try to get drugs in prison in every prison in the country. Its a never ending problem that cannot be combatted. Not everyone is a drug user or drug dealer so because a few inmates attempted to get drugs in on the other side of the state, 50,000 men & women are on lockdown while staff get paid overtime for working and then training. Sure staff need to be trained, its a never ending process, as things change, people need to be updated, trained, to do better, but there is always a better way & Sec. Wetzel & Gov. Wolf failed in this most recent lockdown. They waited 3 days before allowing us to shower, the guard on my block is telling other staff how they love this lockdown, he is personally making \$60 an hour to watch people take a shower.

I fully agree that corrections is needed but there should be a limit and there should be a time to say enough is enough.

I recently spoke with State Representative Donna Bullock, we spoke about slavery in prison and I didn't follow President Obama's accomplishments, I

followed his failures and to me, the 1 thing that mattered that he failed on was abolishing slavery in the United States. He did alot of good for this country but as a black president, the first ever, he should have outlawed slavery in this country. The 13th amendment still allows for prison slavery & its completely wrong. Enough of my ramblings, this is just to update you on my day, the historic event on August 22, & until our government listens, Pennsylvania will never recover from this debt. We continue to close or "merge" schools in order to save money but the cost of corrections can & should be reduced. Scott Wagner for governor would be a disaster that Pa would never recover from but we need Gov. Wolf to sit down and listen.

We can fix alot of the problems but not until everyone comes to the table to discuss them and how to resolve them.

Oct. 18th will our lifers org. banquet, EVERY Pa politician is invited. I will personally save the money needed to pay for someone else's meal. So will alot of other lifers.

I guess thats all for now. We're still on an indefinite lockdown, one that will cost taxpayers millions of dollars, so hopefully Gov. Wolf is smart enough to end this overreaction so we can get back to work. We have alot of positive projects that we are working on and Ill share them with you in the future. I recently went through the 1 year anniversary of losing my mom, it was a hard day. Take care, if my kid is reading this, Krista, I love you more than you can possibly imagine. Thank you for continuing to read what I write, I hope I don't disappoint. Go spend some time with your family, thats what matters in life. I learned this year that family isn't just about blood either. I have friends whom I care very deeply for who family to me. Take care and God Bless. Ciao.