

Date: 8/8/2019 9:01:38 PM

HARLAN RICHARDS

August 8, 2019

Get Naked to Pee

I have the dubious distinction of being the first prisoner in Stanley prison to have to get strip-searched as a precondition of using the bathroom while on a visit. Apparently, it's a new policy implemented in Stanley to deter smuggling drugs into prison.

The rumor I heard was that last Tuesday a prisoner was caught in the visiting room with drugs - meth and another drug. He had just gotten his visiting privileges back and got caught on his first visit. I have no idea if this rumor is true, but if it is, why does this incident require me to get naked to pee?

I'm 65 years old, been in prison 35 years, have never had a conduct report or a dirty urinalysis test. Why would a blanket policy be implemented to impact prisoners like me? I'm probably the least likely prisoner to be involved in drug smuggling. I'm a tired out old man being visited by an equally old woman. We sit and talk and eat M & Ms. Old guys are also the most likely to have to urinate frequently while at the same time being the least likely to use or smuggle drugs. In other words, the prisoners least likely to be breaking the rules are the most likely to be subjected to the new policy. Fortunately for me, when I get a weekend visit it's only 2 hours long and I can go that long without having to pee. But when I get a weekday visit it lasts for 3 hours and if I drink a soda I'm gonna have to pee before the visit is over. In my opinion, this is another case of prison officials implementing a policy just to do something (however, they may have information I don't have access to which justifies their new policy). But I have a better idea: prosecute every prisoner caught smuggling or doing drugs and prosecute their visitors; send the prisoner to maximum security for the rest of his sentence; permanently take away contact visits; and make him ineligible for ERP (earned release program).

Here's another suggestion: create a profile of the type of prisoner most likely to smuggle drugs and apply the policy only to them. Factors could include: in prison for a drug related crime, young, prior dirty UAs, previous conduct reports for contraband offenses. Anyway, it should be something rationally related to the character and lifestyle of a person who uses drugs.

And most of all, publicize it when a prisoner gets caught violating the anti-drug policy so all potential drug smugglers know that there will be dire consequences for them and their visitors if they get caught.

However, the reality is that guys who do drugs in prison are not held accountable. They get a slap on the wrist: a few days in seg and a short stretch of no-contact visits. Then they remain eligible for Earned Release Program (ERP), where they get up to 3 years cut off their sentence if they have a drug problem.

It makes no difference to me whether guys in prison do drugs or not. But if the administration really wants to stop it, then there needs to be well-publicized consequences to deter it - including warning visitors before every visit that they will be prosecuted if the person they are visiting is caught using drugs after the visit.

In my opinion, making old men get naked to pee is not the answer.