

March 10, 2016

The Honorable Lesil McGuire  
The Honorable Gabrielle LeDoux  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Regarding: SB91/HB205

Dear members of the Judiciary Committees,

The ONLY provision in this pro-crime bill, benefiting both inmates and the public, is housing violent and non violent offenders separately. SB91/HB205 contains: NO incentive for criminals to change their behavior, NO effective "advancing crime victim priorities", NO increase in law enforcement officers, NO new or expanded addiction treatment, NO mental health treatment, NO education, NO family counseling, NO job training, NO reintegration programs, NO real accountability. The only offenders eligible for any type of programs, which SB91 mandates but does not fund, are those who make it to a halfway house...from prison.

This bill effectively eliminates prison for A LOT of criminals. Nearly all non violent criminals (which is anyone who didn't murder, rape, or maim) would be placed on electronic monitoring, thus not eligible for programs. Electronic monitoring allows the offender relative freedom to "look for a job", and attend to "personal business" for several hours each day. Private EM companies have already demonstrated a gross lack of oversight and reporting of violations, and a government run EM system will be worse. SB91/HB205 does NOT require tougher penalties for these types of issues.

Probation, half way houses, & electronic monitoring are considered "incarceration" by the State of Alaska, even though the definition of incarceration is, "the state of being confined in prison; imprisonment.". I don't see how lounging on mom's couch playing xbox all day, and partying with loser friends all night is incarceration. Making life more comfortable for criminals with less real incarceration, dismissed charges, lighter sentences, and reduced bail conditions will NOT convince criminals to clean up their act.

Can we successfully cut the budget, reduce crime, and increase public safety? Not without changing criminal behavior, which SB91/HB205 does NOT accomplish. *When the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change, people change.* Criminals prey on society because it's the easy road. Their thinking & decision making processes, and values are not the same as a law abiding citizen. You cannot change behavior without education, training, and treatment for addiction and mental health. Spending money on effective programs is an investment in our future. What we're doing now DOES NOT WORK. The state may make their stats look good on paper, but we'll never save money if we don't address the root of the problem. **Cutting costs by throwing criminals right back into the community, without changing their mind set and behavior, is a gross injustice to both offenders and law abiding citizens.**

I've listed suggestions for changes that will cut costs in the long run, reduce crime, and increase public safety.

1. Chronic offenders, sexual predators, and violent criminals should be spending a minimum of ¾ of their prison sentences IN PRISON. Sitting in prison for less than 6 months of a 5 year sentence does not instill the desire to change behavior. Neither does the comfort and freedom of electronic monitoring.
2. Prisons are a taxpayer funded necessity, they should NOT be for profit, EVER. Take the profit out of prisons and make them self sufficient.
3. Prisons can become nearly self sufficient by:
  - \*Producing their own electricity, via treadmills, solar power, wind power, etc. Excess electricity can be sold back to power companies for the grid.
  - \*Growing, preserving, and cooking the majority of their own food. Supplement with beans, rice,

sugar, flour, salt, and coffee as needed.

\*Selling furniture and other hand made goods, butchering services, and excess produce will provide jobs, and the extra income needed to purchase necessities for the prison.

\*Allow prison work crews to bid jobs for construction and road work, which will give prisoners critical job skills and experience.

4. Require prisoners, as a stipulation of release, to acquire their GED, and complete classes in parenting, anger management, relationship building, coping skills, job training, budgeting and finance, personal responsibility, citizenship, etc.
5. Cut out television, video games, and junk food. Studies show these changes improve overall behavior. Encourage reading and listening to books. If prisoners are engaged in self sufficiency and educational activities they won't have a lot of idle time to cause trouble.
6. Rehab should be voluntary, and administered in prison concurrent with the prisoner's requirements above. It should not be used as a get out of jail free card like it is now.
7. Prisoners should be paid the federal minimum wage for working, and be required to pay a 1/3 of their salary toward room and board. 1/3 toward savings to help them get on their feet after they've served their sentence. And 1/3 toward court ordered restitution to their victims. All of this would be part of budgeting, finance, and personal responsibility training.
8. **I believe the absolute best alternative to no consequences (which is essentially what SB91/HB205 is), and overcrowded prisons is a 3 step process made up of: Clean Camp, Development Station, and a Reintegration Program.**

**I.** Clean Camp's focus is detox & rehab, identifying and treating mental health issues, and learning the value of hard work by offering opportunities for success in a controlled environment. Camp would be remotely located, and mostly self sufficient. It could be voluntary to avoid legal hassles. Offenders could choose prison instead. It would only be offered to non violent first or second time offenders. Camp would be minimally staffed with administrators, teachers/mentors, and medical personnel. There are no walls or fences, only wilderness. Offenders would wear ankle monitors to track their location. Electricity would only be available full time in staff areas, and perhaps part time in the kitchen and offender gathering area. It could easily be generated by wind and solar. This camp would address a multitude of needs.

\*First, it would remove the offender from society, preventing continued crime and eliminating the distraction of friends and relatives who encourage their behavior.

\*Second, it would provide the opportunity for rehabilitation without the temptation of acquiring drugs, which are readily available in Alaska's prisons now. Additionally mental health issues would be diagnosed and treated.

\*Third, offenders would learn valuable character building, and job skills by building shelters, growing, cooking, and preserving their food (including raising livestock), chopping and gathering wood, etc.

\*Fourth, offenders would not move to the second stage of the program until they complete goals set for them after evaluation by DOC staff. Studies show it takes a 60 days of rehab for an addict's brain function to begin returning to normal. If the offender chooses to learn, they'll move forward faster. If the offender does not improve they'll stay in Camp until they meet their goals, or choose to return to prison. Camp is meant to be tough to give the offender a sense of accomplishment.

**II.** Development Station is phase two. Offenders move closer to town and live in military style barracks. The focus of Development Station is learning necessary skills for successfully navigating in society, such as: personal finance, anger management, coping skills, communication, relationship building, learning to set boundaries, parenting, writing a resume and interviewing, GED, continued mental health evaluation & treatment, etc. In this phase offender crews may take on jobs and divide pay as laid out in suggestion #7 above. When the offender meets their individual goals for phase two, they'll move to phase three.

**III.** Phase three, the Reintegration Program, would move offenders back into the community.

Offenders would be closely monitored by PO's, and referred to non profit organizations to receive help in meeting their goals. When offenders have completed goals for this phase, and stayed on track for 1-2 years, they'll graduate from the program. Goals for this program include:

- \*Securing housing.
- \*Job training and placement.
- \*Volunteering in the community 5+ hours per week.
- \*Mandatory family counseling.
- \*Actively seek a healthy hobby.
- \*Continued mental health treatment.
- \*Required participation in an addiction recovery program, which includes finding a mentor/sponsor.

**IV.** At any time the inmate may choose to go back to a previous camp, or go to prison to complete their sentence. If the prisoner chooses to return to prison they cannot move back to camp during their sentence. This plan would be a challenge to set up initially, but would ultimately save the state, and public money by addressing the root of the problem. It cannot cost more than we spend now for inmates to lay around all day biding their time before returning to the same bad choices.

The revolving door of crime costs victims, LE, court personnel, DOC, and every taxpayer. Invest in programs that stop the revolving door and we all save money. I believe the community will support those who are honestly trying to straighten out their lives. As it is now, we have no hope or expectation that criminals will change their ways, that crime will decrease, or that anything will improve.

Alaska ranks #1 in the nation for Per Capita spending. If the Legislature is serious about cutting the budget:

- Limit legislative employee salaries and benefits to the average national median.
- Cap per diem state employee spending, and require valid receipts before reimbursement.
- Cut education spending by 10% across the board. Alaska ranks #2 in the U.S. for education spending, but #49 for education quality and student success. Overspending for embarrassingly poor results is not sustainable. It's time to fix the problem, not continue throwing money at it.
- Institute a capped state sales tax. Why should Alaskans bear 100% of the burden when tourism is quickly replacing oil for generating the highest revenue? Do not saddle hard working residents with an income tax.

Sincerely,  
Heidi Deadmond  
Palmer Alaska  
snippycat2@yahoo.com