

SB

175

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SSSB175

Revision Date: _____	Dept. Affected: <u>Health and Social Services</u>
Title: <u>"An Act relating to correctional institutions and their administration; ..."</u>	BRU: <u>Medical Assistance</u>
Sponsor: <u>Sens. Donley, Pearce</u>	Component: <u>Medicaid Services</u>
Requestor: <u>JUD, FIN</u>	COMPONENT SERIAL NO. <u>2077</u>
	See also (SN#): _____

Expenditures/Revenues: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02
PERSONAL SERVICES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TRAVEL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CONTRACTUAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
SUPPLIES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EQUIPMENT	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
LAND & STRUCTURES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
GRANTS, CLAIMS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
MISCELLANEOUS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CHANGES IN REVENUES ()						

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1003 GF Match	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1004 GF	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1005 GF/Program Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1037 GF/Mental Health	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other (please specify)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY96) cost: \$0.0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

SSSB175 amends the AS 33.16.900(10) definition of "severely medically disabled" from "a person who has a medical condition that requires confinement to bed and the person is likely to remain confined to bed throughout the entire period of parole or to die from the condition" to include the provision that, in the opinion of the Parole Board, the person's medical condition significantly reduces the probability of committing an offense similar to the offense for which the person was convicted or of committing an offense that is punishable as a felony. SSSB175 deletes the provision that the person be "confined to bed" and states that "...the person is likely to remain subject to the medical condition throughout the entire period of parole; or die from the medical condition."

The Division of Medical Assistance does not anticipate that SSSB175 will impact the Medicaid or General Relief Medical programs since impact on these programs is related to an increase in the number of prisoners released as a result of passage of this bill. According to the Dept. of Corrections, it does not anticipate that the bill will "substantially impact" the department since inmates who are diagnosed as severely medically disabled are already released into parole and/or other noninstitutional settings. The Division of Public Assistance also does not anticipate that SSSB175 will impact that division.

Prepared by: Inge Lysdal *Inge Lysdal AL*
Division: Medical Assistance

Phone: (907) 465-3355
Date: 02/01/96

Approved by Com: Karen Pearce, Commissioner *Karen Pearce*
Agency: Department of Health & Social Services

Date: 2/7/96

PREPARER TO PROV
For further

FISCAL NOTES

OFFICE

A M E N D M E N T

OFFERED IN THE SENATE

BY

TO: SSSB 175

- 1 Page 3, line 25, after "a correctional facility":
- 2 Insert "other than a level of basic cable television service that is available as a
- 3 substitute for services that are broadcast to the public in the community in which a
- 4 correctional facility is located"

**SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT
First Committee of Referral**

DATE: 1/22/96

FURTHER: Finance

Date of 5-Day Notice: _____
(in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED INTO OFFICE: _____

The Judiciary Committee considered SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SB 175

Relating to the "No Frills" prison act.

Φ 175

and recommends:

be replaced with _____ CS SSSB 175 (~~175~~) *Jud*

Senate Bill: same title
 new title
House Bill: same title
 technical title
 new: SCR# _____

adopt previous _____ CS _____ (_____)

attached amendment(s)

adopt Letter of Intent by _____ Committee

further referral to the _____ Committee

SIGNING DO PASS	DP	OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	NR	DNP	AM
<i>Lu De Prester</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>J. Ellis</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Mike Miller</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Bill Adams</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
CHAIR: <i>Chris Taylor</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

Department Date Zero Fiscal

Health & Social Service	7/1/96	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

new ←

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):*

Department Date Zero Fiscal

Health & Social Service	7/1/96	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

APPROPRIATION -- no fiscal note

*include fiscal notes accompanying Governor's bill

P. UZ/UZ
FAX NO. 9072697420
DEPT CORRECTIONS/INST
-22-96 MON 16:01

<u>Institution</u>	<u>TV</u>	<u>Cable</u>	<u>VCR</u>	<u>Books</u>	<u>Magazines</u>
6th Avenue	dayrooms	no	no	5	5
Anvil Mountain	dayrooms	yes (basic)*	no	no limit	no limit
Cook Inlet Pretrial	dayrooms	no	no	5	5
Fairbanks	dayrooms (basic)*	no yes (basic)*	no	5	5
Hiland Mountain	honor status	no	no	limit varies w/program	
Ketchikan	dayrooms	yes (basic)*	no	5	5
Lemon Creek day ^{room}	buy own	yes (prem)	no	10	
Matsu Pretrial	dayrooms	no	no	5	5
Palmer (medium)	honor status	no	yes	varies	varies
Palmer (minimum)	buy own	yes (prem)	yes	varies	varies
Spring Creek	yes buy own	yes (basic)*	no	10	10
Wildwood	yes buy own	yes (prem)	no	no limit	no limit
WW Pretrial	no dayrooms	no	no	5	5
YECC (Bethel)	no Dayrooms	yes (basic)*	no	5	5

* basic cable is used at these sites because broadcast tv is either unavailable or unable to penetrate the structure of the facility.

NB: One inmate at FCC has his own tv b, court order.



SENATOR DAVE DONLEY
ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

**Sponsor Statement
for
Senate Bill 175
The Alaska No Frills Prison Act**

Senate Bill 175 sets limits on prisoners' possessions and activities by regulating the luxuries for prisoners housed in our state correctional facilities. SB 175 also allows the Department of Corrections to recoup costs for certain health care services provided to prisoners. SB 175 amends the definition of "severely medically disabled" person in an effort to minimize state funded health care costs for those individuals. The bill would also increase the amount of inmates working in our correctional facilities by expanding the Correctional Industries Program.

Senate Bill 175 would remove many of the luxuries currently afforded to inmates in the state's correctional facilities including such things as access to cable television, use of body building equipment, and possession of pornographic material. The bill would also place reasonable limits on the quality of food that is currently being served in correctional facilities.

Senate Bill 175 would also require inmates to reimburse the state for either the full or partial costs of treatment for any pre-existing medical condition. The term "severely medically disabled" is amended by Senate Bill 175 allowing the parole board greater flexibility in granting "special medical paroles". Parole would only be granted if the board determines that the inmate's ability to commit an offense similar to the offense for which the inmate was convicted or an offense punishable by a felony is significantly reduced. The parole board would also have to determine if the inmate is likely to be inflicted with the medical condition for the duration of the parole or is likely to die from the condition.

Senate Bill 175
Sponsor Substitute
Page 2

Senate Bill 175 would restructure the Correctional Industries Commission in an effort to increase both the productivity and the amount of inmates working in the Correctional Industries Program. In many instances, inmates lack the necessary job skills or training to effectively perform jobs located within the Correctional Industries program. Correctional Industries has not been able to market products high in demand because the prison workforce is unqualified to perform technical labor, and no training is available for inmates. Inmates with lesser job skills would receive vocational training for jobs within the industry increasing both productivity and performance in the program.

DD/jja 

BY GARRY BOULARD

WHAT'S TOUGH ENOUGH

In response to the public's perception
that prison life is too easy,
new policies are designed
to make life there
as unpleasant as possible.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Alabama hasn't seen anything like it since the heyday of the 1960s civil rights movement: journalists and TV camera crews flying in from all parts of the world, spirited and sometimes angry public debate and well-known civil liberty groups filing lawsuits against the state itself.

But the center of Alabama's most recent cyclone is not the church in Montgomery where Martin Luther King Jr. exhorted his followers to give of themselves for the civil rights movement, nor is it Selma where those same followers confronted a violent and bloody local reaction.

Today the controversy in Alabama is about the men in uniform moving along the state's highways and the chains that bind them. Alabama has reinstated the chain gang, one of the most powerful and some say brutal, symbols of the Southern past.

The man in charge of the program, Prison Commissioner R. Jones, says it is all part of an effort to hold down prison costs.

"The tougher prison time gets, the more likely it is that you'll see the number of repeat prisoners decrease," says Jones, who has the solid backing of Alabama's Governor Bob James for his chain gang idea. "And as that number decreases, so will the enormous costs running our prisons."

CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

Although Jones' chain gangs have won the enmity of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) of Alabama, which has filed a class action suit to end them, one other state—Arizona—has also brought the chain gangs. And Florida is planning a similar effort next year.

Of course, the chain gang concept may prove to be short-lived if the lawsuit against it succeeds. Rhonda Brownstein, a staff attorney with the SPLC in Montgomery, said she expects the courts to prohibit such prison practices because they are a form of "cruel and unusual punishment" that is unconstitutional under the Eighth Amendment.

Brownstein said the SPLC suit would also challenge, on the same cruel and unusual punishment basis, Alabama's practice of chaining to hitching posts prisoners who refuse to work. "They have just gone way overboard with all of this stuff. I think if we defeat them on it, it will provide a precedent for other states," she said.

But the legal challenges haven't stopped Jones' chain gangs where prisoners are connected by lightweight leg irons in crews five as they dig ditches and clean up the debris along the state highways. There are currently some 800 repeat offenders working on such gangs, but Jones hopes to bring that number up to also 1,200 by the early part of next year.

Because the nation's prison population is growing rapidly, the chain gangs represent only the most recent, if still highly controversial, answer to holding down costs. They also represent a trend toward making life tougher for prisoners as one solution to recidivism.

PRISON POPULATION BURGEONS

Just the sheer number of inmates seems to demand some sort of new approach. As of 1995, the number of people in the nation's prisons topped the 1 million mark, up from about 400,000 in 1984. At the same time, average state spending on "corrections" has more than tripled, from about \$6 billion in 1984 to just under \$20 billion in 1995, constituting nearly 10 percent of the average state's spending in 1995.

And in some states, the growth rate of the prison population has far exceeded that of the general population. The number

Information from the Southern Poverty Law Center, which regularly publishes the Prisoners' Rights Monitor and State Legislative Watchdog.

PRISONS GO PRIVATE

prisoners in Florida, for example, has more than doubled from 26,000 in 1984 to nearly 56,000 last year. Missouri's prisoners went from 8,300 a decade ago to more than 17,000 today, while New York's inmate numbers grew from over 30,000 a decade ago to nearly 67,000 today.

"Prisons are becoming one of the fastest growing budget items in the states today," said James Wooten, president of Safe Streets Alliance in Washington, a group that supports longer sentences for violent offenders and truth-in-sentencing initiatives. "But we are finding that the longer time a violent criminal serves in prison, the far less likely it is that that person will commit the same or a similar kind of crime again. That means, over time, you can reduce your prison costs because you won't be seeing as many repeat offenders."

VIOLENCE BEGETS LONGER, TOUGHER TIME

Although many prison officials and civil libertarians dispute the beneficial effects of longer sentences and harsher prison time for repeat offenders, a consensus among the states appears to be emerging. Make those guilty of violent crimes serve longer and tougher time while offering alternative solutions to other types of offenses.

New York may be a case in point. With a prison population of just under 67,000, New York has had one of the largest inmate growth rates in the nation, a 400 percent increase from 1974 when the state housed about 15,000 prisoners. The state's prison budget has also jumped from more than \$4 million annually to more than \$17 million today.

But this spring, Governor George Pataki proposed doing away with a series of 1973 laws enacted by then-Governor Nelson Rockefeller that mandated stiff prison sentences for drug offenders.

"Pataki's proposal was an absolute breakthrough for us," said Charles "Skip" Carriere, a spokesman for Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver. "We had been trying for years to get sentencing reform through the legislature, but because it was a conservative, tough-on-crime Republican who broached the idea, we finally reached an agreement."

Indeed, after Pataki's proposal was first aired, Robert Ganga, director of the Correctional Association of New York, told *The New York Times*, "It's another case of the Prison going to China syndrome. Pataki is considered a hard-liner, if you will, a hawk, on those issues. He's already proved his stripes by

increasingly, privatization is being seen as an alternative to the traditional publicly run prison, offering a possible way to accommodate current calls for incarceration while keeping prison costs down.

"Privatization is increasing by about 25 percent to 30 percent a year," said Charles Logan, a professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut, "even though it is still only a small percentage of the national total." The number of privately run prison facilities has jumped from less than five a decade ago to more than 30 today, according to a study by the Center for Law and Democracy in Washington, D.C. The inmates they house have increased from about 2,000 a decade ago to just under 50,000 today. That number is expected to rise to 65,000 by 1996.

"The private sector can do it less expensively because its motivation is entirely different," said Richard Crane, an attorney in Nashville, Tenn., and former counsel for the largest prison privatization firm in the country, Corrections Corporation of America.

Crane argues that because showing a profit is the only thing that matters to business, private prisons are more likely to be cost efficient and able to do more with less money. That argument has proved so persuasive that Corrections Corporation now runs four prisons in Texas where it has entered into contracts with the state government promising to keep costs 10 percent below previous state-run prison budgets.

A recent study by the Tennessee General Assembly appears to support Crane's argument. Comparing two similar prisons in neighboring South Carolina, both built at the same time and each housing just over 1,000 inmates—one publicly run, the other private—the study concluded that the privately run prison cost \$150,000 less a year in operational costs than its public counterpart.

Privatized prisons have also won high marks from lawmakers and even prison advocacy groups for working with inmates to resolve conflicts and iron out complaints and problems before they lead to larger and sometimes deadly disputes.

Some experts believe that private management can also respond more effectively to the get-tough approach if that means keeping prisoners incarcerated for longer periods of time. "The longer you keep an inmate in prison, the

more expensive it gets," said Charles Thomas, director of the Private Corrections Department at the University of Florida. "In that sense, I think privately run prisons respond in a more cost-effective manner to the get-tough movement."

Thomas also contends that, as the get-tough movement produces more prison facilities, private management may also be seen as a more alternative simply because "the private sector has a much smaller lag time between the award of a contract to build a new prison and its opening it, than the public sector does. On average, private prisons are up and running in 12 to 18 months, while it may take up to 24 months for the public sector to do it."

But Crane, among other privatization opponents, opposes much of the new get-tough reform legislation coming from the states. "It's a bad management device," he said. "If you take away things like TV and weights and sleeping from an inmate, you've essentially taken everything away from him—and that in this person is going to be a whole lot harder to control."

Of course, not everyone agrees that private prisons are the best way to go, with or without a get-tough movement. Jim Schmitz with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees faults private prisons for their "high employee turnover rates." Schmitz: "That is one of the pitfalls when you do not think about the bottom line and saving money. You end up with a large number of underpaid employees in high-stress jobs who are frequently leaving. Because public employees get higher wages and benefits, they tend to stay with their jobs in prisons longer, which is less expensive overall."

Professor Logan, however, thinks private prisons can be both cost effective and tough.

"The solution is to make things more tough but not necessarily more harsh," he said. "Tougher prison time means less probation, parole, less discretionary release, all of which is more in the direction of making the system more fair and consistent, than private prisons are a better way to go because one of the things they are most concerned about is having the prison run smoothly. They have proved that they can be tough without making the prisoners worse, which is a pretty important thing."

supporting the death penalty and other hard-line positions."

New York's new sentencing legislation, which passed both houses by overwhelming margins in June, redirects nonviolent, drug-addicted inmates to treatment programs. In the process, it will free up at least 3,000 prison beds annually, making it virtually certain now that violent offenders will be imprisoned.

In North Carolina, concerns about prison overcrowding and budget busting prompted the General Assembly last year to pass a measure by Representative Phil Baddour that balances the number of people sentenced to prison with the actual number of available prison bed spaces. Using a "felony punishment chart," judges under the new legislation determine, among other things, the seriousness of a convict's crime, his past criminal record and then how much prison space is available.

Now in North Carolina, violent and repeat offenders are automatically incarcerated, while first and second offenders who committed certain nonviolent felonies might be given suspended sentences if they complete such alternative punishment as boot camp, house arrest or intensive probation.

Baddour—ironically defeated in 1994 by an opponent who portrayed him as soft on crime—said his measure was an attempt to punish violent offenders while keeping an eye on rising prison costs. "Once you have the decision that first-degree murder is at the top and way down at the bottom is an infraction like jaywalking, with a lot of stuff in between, you can rank crimes according to their seriousness and then see how much prison space you have left," he said.

Similar presumptive sentencing rules, which are essentially devices to gain control over the nation's rapidly escalating prison popula-

tions, have been enacted in 17 other states.

But Charles Logan, a professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut and author of *Private Prisons—Cons and Pros* thinks it states can afford to build more prisons and house inmates longer "they adopt what he called a "cost benefit analysis frame."

"There should be with prison policy an estimation of the costs and payoffs," Logan explained. "But that does not necessarily mean that you would have less use of prisons. It might mean instead that the state simply will become more cautious in using their prisons too broadly."

DIVERGENT VIEWS ON TOUGH TIME

There are, of course, widely divergent views on the wisdom of making prison life harder and longer, even for the most dangerous convicts. Many lawmakers, alarmed over what they see as rising crime rates in their own districts, believe prisons should be as brutal as possible. "The people who run the prisons want happy prisoners. I want prisoners to be so miserable that they won't even think of coming back," said Representative Mark McInnis of Mississippi, where lawmakers last year in a special session voted to prohibit inmates from possessing or using "weird" equipment, compact disc players and televisions among other items. Lawmakers also approved a measure requiring inmates to wear striped uniforms with the word "convict" showing clearly on their backs.

Others believe the "get-tough" prison reform approach is a smokescreen that only hides a bigger problem that the states simply cannot afford—more and more prisoners and prisons. "I think you have to wonder at some point where it is all going to end," said Jenn

Gainsborough, a spokeswoman for the National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, who believes states should concentrate more on alternatives to prison. "Do we just keep packing them in or do we try to find some sort of alternative? Surely, any rational person can see that the present trends simply can't continue."

Jim Gondoles, executive director of the American Correctional Association, thinks the only way to approach prison issues today is comprehensively, taking into consideration the seriousness of an inmate's crime and the probable effects of both increased punishment and tougher prison time and rehabilitation. "If you don't include other things in your approach things like education and skills classes or even drug rehabilitation, then you're not taking a balanced approach and it is going to show in the results—prison violence, which is costly to the state, and a much higher rate of recidivism which is also expensive," Gondoles said.

Tilman Bishop, a Colorado senator who introduced a bill taking away privileges from inmates who file frivolous lawsuits, thinks prisons will become more severe places because of a growing perception among the public that violence and crime are worse than before. "There is a concern that crime is out of control and that the public is responsible for it—take to prison and live the

1996

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good life," said the Colorado Republican, whose measure was overwhelmingly approved by the legislature last spring. "It is now up to us as lawmakers to address those concerns and see what needs to be improved upon or taken away or just changed."

Legislatures in more than a dozen states including Arizona, Mississippi, Texas, California and Michigan have passed or introduced measures reducing prisoner access to weight lifting equipment, television and telephones. In this effort, though, the states may be taking their cue from federally managed prisons. According to a recent survey conducted by the Corrections Compendium, roughly 60 percent of all federal prisons have eliminated some prison privileges.

That survey, in fact, showed that state prison systems in Oregon, Texas, Kansas and Utah have even banned smoking in their facilities while California, Idaho, Michigan, Oklahoma and South Dakota have restricted smoking to designated areas of prison property.

And nearly all federal and state prisons are being affected this year by the loss of Pell grants for prisoners who want to take college classes. In 1994, more than 28,000 inmates received such grants nationally for programs in paralegal training and computer technology. This year, as part of President Clinton's Omnibus Crime Bill of 1994, that funding has dried up and most of the programs in the prisons have ended.

Even in Alabama, where the chain gangs would seem to offer the ultimate "get tough" solution, new policy is designed to make life as unpleasant as possible. "We work these men 12 hours a day, 60 hours a week and they have to do it," said Commissioner Jones. "And during that time they have none of the privileges enjoyed by the other prisoners—no television, no telephone, no basketball, no visitors."

Jones also thinks his get-tough approach could prove to be more economical. Already, through staff layoffs and scaled-down programs, Jones estimates that he's reduced the average costs per prisoner in Alabama from \$9,500 in 1991 to \$9,000 this year, which is substantially lower than the national per inmate cost of about \$16,000. "And I think we can get it down to about \$8,500 by 1996," he added.

But not all states want to duplicate Alabama's example. Prison officials worry what the effects of harder time might be from a management perspective. Even within Alabama there is opposition. "We are right now on the verge of a major riot," said Alabama Representative John Rogers. "And it isn't just the prisoners who are angry. The staff workers are also demoralized. They are being ordered to push and push, even though they know it could result in violence that will hurt them too."

Still others worry that state spending on prisons shows no end in sight. "We can continue to move in this direction, but, if we do, we have to realize it is going to cost more and more," said Professor Logan. "We have to be willing to make a large

commitment that we may not see any benefits from in a long time.

But in the absence of any other sure solutions, that commitment may prove easier to make than many imagine. "If anyone has a better approach to all of this than we do, I wish he'd come forward—because none of us has a perfect solution," said McInnis of Mississippi. "We're just trying to battle crime the best way we know how by showing that if you're going to commit a crime, you're going to have to pay for it. I don't know any other way to go about it."

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March 4, 1996

RECEIVED
MAR 7 ' 1996

Senator Dave Donnelly
Capital Building
Room 11
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Ans'd.....

Senator Robin Taylor
Capital Building
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Bill Concerning Prison Conditions

Dear Senator Donnelly and Senator Taylor:

I was very concerned to read the article in the Anchorage Daily News on February 27, 1996, concerning the bill that you are apparently supporting to restrict prison conditions.

While I have the utmost respect for both of you gentlemen and recognize that you are dedicated Senators with the best interest of the State of Alaska in mind, I take serious issue with the proposition apparently advanced by the bill, namely that restricting inmates' access to the materials, items and food in question, is truly in the interest of justice and in the interest of rehabilitation.

As I believe you both know, I am a practicing trial attorney in the state of Alaska and have been so for approximately twenty-four years.

Much of my early career and a substantial portion of my present career is devoted to defending these persons unfortunate enough to be charged and/or convicted of crimes.

While I certainly agree that both the prospect and reality of a prison sentence should be such as to serve as a strong deterrent to those who might be tempted to violate the Alaska statutes, it is also important to realize that one of the basic tenets of our Alaska constitution, a constitution drafted by men and women of great wisdom, is that the principle of reformation and rehabilitation should be of foremost consideration in our penal system.

Such a philosophy not only incorporates basic concepts of humane treatment, but is in fact "cost effective" insofar as if we can truly rehabilitate or reform an offender, we avoid significant future human and economic costs to society from potential recidivism and/or the necessity of additional incarceration.

Having spent much of my career dealing on a day-to-day basis with persons who are incarcerated, I can assure you that Alaska prisons are not "country clubs" and that further, allowing prisoners access to basic items such as computers, etc., is not "coddling them." In point of fact, in this computer age, access to computers is vital, both for educational purposes and further for inmates to pursue their post-conviction rights, which are likewise basic constitutional rights and exist to avoid the significant injustice of those who are in fact wrongfully convicted, serving time with no recourse.

I would welcome an opportunity to discuss this matter with you in person, and impart to you why I feel the bill in question, while undoubtedly well-intentioned on your part, is nonetheless ill-advised.

Looking forward to a response, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

WEIDNER & ASSOCIATES, INC.
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Phillip Paul Weidner", followed by a horizontal line.

Phillip Paul Weidner

PPW/jmr