

IMPROVING THE PRISON SYSTEM

The way we incarcerate prisoners in Tennessee can be improved. I believe that violent, habitual criminals should not be paroled, and should serve their full sentences up to the last minute. But how can we do this without bankrupting the state?

First, we build areas that the prisoners can stay in. For example, a metal warehouse type building sectioned off with fences. Next, we use their beds on a rotating basis. Their belongings would go into a locker and they would have eight hours to sleep in their bunks. This would triple the number of inmates that could be incarcerated for a fraction of the cost of building new prisons.

When a prisoner's time to be paroled is within two years, they would be transferred to a smaller prison. This prison will basically be an apartment complex surrounded by fences. This prisoner will learn various ways as to how to function in the outside world. I know a man who, upon getting out of prison, did not know what a cell phone was. Since he did not have any type of education to help him live in the outside world, he was in trouble within hours of release. In fact between 40% to 50% of those released from prison will return within three years.

Other classes such as how to handle a credit card, a checkbook, and establishing and maintaining good credit could be taught. This, along with other education programs, will help prisoners to have a chance at success outside. The problems these people face are serious. They have little or no money and no place to live. Their family may or may not help them. Unless they can get a good start, they are going to come back into the prison system.

More apartment type prisons can also be built for those that want to live there after their release. These will be built so that temporary work agencies can pick them up, or the now free citizen, can take a bus to work. This would also be a good use for the unused mobile homes that are sitting in Arkansas that were purchased but never used for FEMA.

The difference in this program is the prisoner pays for the services such as rent, food, etc. Minimum risk prisoners can also be in these apartment complex prisons. They can be taken to work and brought back at the end of the day. Their paychecks are direct deposited into the state where rent, restitution, and other expenses are deducted. When the prisoners's sentence is up, he can keep his job and have money to find a place to live.

At my family's auto dealership, we have a problem with juveniles stealing our vehicles. Why do they do this? The answer is simple. They are not punished. We caught a 17 year old who was in our car. He was on probation for auto theft and received yet more probation for stealing our automobile. There was no place to put him.

The prison system needs some help. By improving the prisoner's ability to function outside, we can reduce crime and incarcerate the more violent offenders longer.

