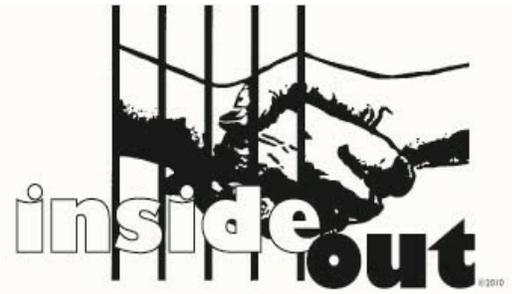


Summer 2015 Highlights

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Directors Corner

Virginia CURE represented on upcoming panels

We are pleased that our Parole Issue Representative, Bill Richardson and Board member Sandra Brandt are sitting on the Parole Review and Update Commission. We are also represented on two other study groups. Our Vice Chair Mary Anne Stone will be a member of a panel titled “ A Strategic Alliance for Safer Communities & a Future On Gangs “ organized by the Research Department of the DOC with the purpose of addressing issues associated with gangs. I am a member of the State Responsible Inmate Realignment Work Group. This group will look at the possibility of prisoners completing reentry programs in jails near their release area. Members of these groups bring various areas of expertise and opinions to the table. This should result in lively discussions and, hopefully, informed recommendations. The Parole Commission has had one meeting as has the the Realignment Work Group. The strategic Alliance group will meet in September.

Carla

Governor McAuliffe Establishes Commission on Parole Review

On June 24, 2015, the Governor issued an Executive Order establishing a Commission on Parole Review. He has charged the Commission with five significant priorities:

Reviewing whether abolishing parole has achieved the intended goals of preventing new felony offenses, reducing crime, and reducing recidivism.

Analyzing the fiscal impact of abolishing parole, as well as the societal costs on communities and families from longer incarceration.

Researching and evaluating what policies and practices have proven successful or unsuccessful in other states, and exploring application of the most successful of these approaches in Virginia.

Examining what other approaches could be used to achieve similar results.

Recommending how Virginia may best position itself to address the public safety challenges resulting from changes to parole.

The Commission is to provide an interim report to the Governor by November 2, with a final report due by December 4. The final recommendations may include proposals for actions by the General Assembly or the

Executive Branch, as well as any potential private sector engagement.

The Governor has appointed a diverse group of 27 members to the Commission. The Commission’s Chair is Mark Earley, a former Attorney General of Virginia. The two co-chairs are Brian Moran, Secretary of Public Safety, and Levar Stoney, Secretary of the Commonwealth.

Other members provide bipartisan representation from the Virginia Senate (Senators Marsden and Vogel) and House of Delegates (Delegates Albo and Torian), and include private citizens with experience in law enforcement, reentry, criminology, and mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as victim advocates, religious leaders, and lawyers who have represented inmates.

One of these 27 members is Sandra Brandt, who serves on Virginia CURE’s Board of Directors. Another member is Bill Richardson, a member of Virginia CURE who has worked on parole reform and other sentencing issues.

Ex officio members of the Commission also include Deputy Secretary of Public Safety Tonya Chapman, Parole Board Chair Karen Brown, Department of Corrections (DOC) Director Harold Clarke, Department of Criminal Justice Services Director Francine Ecker, and Department of Social Services Commissioner Margaret Schultze.

(Continued on page 2)

(Parole Commission continued)

The Commission held its first meeting on July 20 where it received three reports. The first was from the former Executive Director of the 1994 commission that recommended the abolition of parole and establishment of the current system of discretionary sentencing guidelines. The second was a statistical report from DOC, and the third was a report from the Parole Board Chair. These reports provided some interesting statistics:

- As of April 30, 2015, there were 4,348 parole-eligible inmates in Virginia, and 33,336 inmates subject to the post-1994 no-parole law.
- Of the 4,348 parole-eligible inmates, 1,200 (28%) are serving one or more life sentences. Of the remaining 3,148, 73% were serving sentences of at least 25 years, and 36% were serving sentences of at least 50 years.
- Of parole-eligible inmates, 65% are black. Of post-1994 no-parole law inmates, 57% are black.
- According to Parole Board Chair Brown, the current parole grant rate is 3%.
- DOC's FY 2014 operating budget was \$1.1 billion. The per capita inmate expense is \$27,462, which represents a 29% increase in the past nine years. Medical expenditures consume 13.6% of DOC's budget.
- There are 287 inmates ineligible for parole because of "three-strikes" laws, only four of whom are ineligible for drug-related offenses.

The Commission's next meeting is scheduled for August 27. These meetings are open to the public. Comments to the Commission may be sent to dreana.gilliam@vpb.virginia.gov and vernita.boone@vadoc.virginia.gov.

Bill Richardson

National Correctional Industry Association Conference

Evidence Based Practices in Private Industry Enterprises

Virginia CURE sent Board member Sandra Brandt to this conference. Here is her report.

One of the many issues that Virginia CURE volunteers have been working on for a two years is to have more PIE (Private Industry Enterprises) Programs in Virginia institutions. I recently attended the National Correctional Industries Association Conference to see what the national organization was doing. I was especially interested in what the conference would say about the use of Evidence Based Practices in Private Industry Enterprises.

The conference lasted 3 days with each day containing 2 workshops. The first session focused on how to develop plans for a prison industry program. Participants formulated strategic plans, implemented and then evaluated progress, making adjustments as necessary to maintain and improve the purpose. Another workshop dealt with recruitment and development of staff. Yet another workshop focused on equipping prisoners by including training in certified technical skills that are marketable in the free world.

Correctional Industries we were informed should have programs that maximize prisoner job opportunities as well as replicate private sector environments in the institutions. They should offer a system that promotes the learning, skill development, values, behaviors and motivation for prisoners to make changes in their lives and that assist them in a successful transition into the community. All of this can be accomplished through the context of work. How do we best prepare a prisoner to work beyond correctional industries? The program in the prisons should be replicated as close to the real private sector and its rules and regulations as possible. An environment will work when the program covers work processes, procedures, equipment, training, and certification and associated methodologies modeled after private industry.

The highlight of the conference came on the last day when we traveled to Miami Correctional Institution in Miami, Indiana. This institution offers the greatest example of what can be done with Prison Industries. The institution receives

a \$700,000 grant each year to translate books for the blind from kindergarten to college level. Inmates work and make an hourly salary and are transitioned from the prison to the private sector to jobs similar to what they were doing in the institution.

The prison also has a warehouse for shipping and receiving of raw materials as well as finished products. The work takes place in two warehouses which cover 100,000 square feet. Inmates assemble all the parts for trucks and automobiles for Advanced Auto. They crate and pack everything from oil filters to transmission belts and all types of parts to ship throughout the country. The facility also produces, from basic materials, a complete bed with bedding and pillow included, for all prisons and jails across Indiana. In addition, they produce all uniforms for the same facilities. The facility also runs a credit card operation with prisoners calling individuals to encourage them to sign up for cards and if they are successful, receiving an incentive bonus.

Indiana has a wealth of programs in their prisons averaging anywhere from 2,400-2,500 inmates in correctional industries. In 2014 over 1,236 inmates graduated statewide from apprenticeship programs. The very successful outcome of the Indiana experience evidences an investment in the programs and an investment in the prisoners, and provides real world experience and skills that are transferable to the community outside the prisons.

The conference provided much information on how to create and run a prison industry program. The programs at Miami provided the best example of how well a prison industry program can work. It is working in Indiana. Why can't this work in Virginia?

Sandra Brandt

Off-again, On-again, Education and Workforce Training

National Correctional Education Association Conference

Board Member Christa Pierpont attended this conference

Finding work, housing and signing a contract all require the ability to read, think and write clearly. Now that education and workforce training is largely computerized, those who do not have the opportunity to use these systems are at an added disadvantage. Does any one care? Yes, there are many who do.

The National Correctional Education Association (CEA) regularly meets to demonstrate state's efforts to provide secured network training so that students can continue to advance themselves. There are even college class options coming back into the realm of possibilities. Limited funding is returning for the Pell Grants and some facilities such as Fluvanna Correctional Center have proven that such a model works. CEA established a demonstration model at a Maryland jail to help other facilities get started. We have been told that VADOC will be visiting this site while also attending the CEA's meeting in Crystal City, VA.

Virginia CURE's board members attend these events and other meetings to encourage the adoption of secured network education and training. This author recently visited a job placement agency that routinely works with job seekers who have a felony record. The manager said that the individual's 'barrier crimes' must be taken into consideration though that becomes less important with time and a good record. When asked what job skills are most needed, the manager reported that people who can work with Excel spreadsheets in a warehouse are easiest to place. Second to that are job seekers who have computer numeric control (CNC) training and experience.

VA CURE is working on your behalf so put us in touch with folks you know who can strengthen that message

Christa Pierpont

A Note About Letters to Virginia CURE

While Virginia CURE cares about your concerns and appreciates being kept informed, we don't have a volunteer staff large enough to reply promptly to all letters received. Please, keep it short and to the point. **Do not send legal papers.** We do not have the capacity to deal with legal issues. Send mail to **P.O. Box 2310, Vienna, VA 22183**

Virginia News

Lawsuit Questions Virginia's practice of placing death row inmates in solitary confinement

The suit was brought by Alfred Prieto, a convicted serial killer who has spent 23 years on Death Row. Experts say this suit could encourage similar lawsuits, since the practice is common across the country. Prieto did not ask the court to find that solitary confinement violates the Eighth Amendment's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment but rather that he is being denied due process by the practice of automatically placing him in solitary confinement. Virginia attempted to have the case thrown out in early stages but was rejected by U.S. District judge Leonie M. Brinkema, who noted that the time was right for a reassessment and stated that the issue needed to "be looked at in the context of evolving and changing moral and legal standards." Brinkema ruled that this practice was unconstitutional, ordering Virginia officials to determine death row inmates' confinement conditions on a case-by-case basis or to change the confinement regime to something less restrictive. However, a panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit voted 2 to 1 to reverse that decision, saying Virginia does not give death row inmates such options. "Prieto, like any other inmate, can only be deprived of that to which he is entitled," the panel said.

Now the case may be headed for the Supreme Court. Justice Kennedy recently opined that it might be time to take a look at the widespread use of solitary in American prisons. "Research still confirms what this court suggested over a century ago: Years on end of near-total isolation exact a terrible price," Kennedy stated. Though Justice Kennedy has voiced concern about the practice and its effects on the mental health of prisoners, other justices such as Clarence Thomas may not be so supportive of examining the issue. Thomas wrote, in another death row case, that "The accommodations in which [he] is housed are a far sight more spacious than those in which his victims ...now rest."

There is growing evidence, however, that this practice is harmful and many consider it a form of torture. There have been numerous studies that show that death row prisoners are no more dangerous than other prisoners and a group of former corrections officers have even argued that solitary confinement is actually counterproductive to institutional safety. Federal officials have, in fact, begun a review of the practice and some states have actually abolished it without serious consequences. However much some want to punish death row inmates, we must remember that there are significant numbers of prisoners who have been exonerated of the crime they were incarcerated for and after being released, have to deal with mental health issues caused by the prolonged isolation.

Virginia Inmate, 81, claims wrongdoing in failed bid for release

An imprisoned, 81-year-old sex offender in ill health contends that he was on his way to geriatric release last year when his case disappeared from a state computer system. When it reappeared a few weeks later, the Virginia Parole Board had a new chair and his bid for freedom was turned down. An appeal was filed in the Virginia Supreme Court. The original board members who voted to grant included Board Chairman Bill Muse, who supported the appeal in an affidavit in which the parole board is accused of violating the prisoner's rights. "Boyd was about to receive the necessary number of votes ... when — flagrantly, without authorization and in violation of the Parole Board's own rules — the voting was improperly manipulated and stopped, then restarted anew weeks after Muse retired," alleges the 17-page appeal. The intent of the computer manipulation, allege Boyd's lawyers, Jonathan Sheldon of Fairfax and Thomas M. Wolf of Richmond, was to make sure that Muse's vote would be nullified and Boyd's release denied. Current Board Chairman Karen Brown, whose experience includes prosecution of child abuse and sexual assault cases, stated that the re vote was taken because proper protocols were not followed during the first vote. An investigation is on going.

Is There an Awakening in Parole Grants in Virginia?

Ultra conservative parole grant rates of 1-3% of prisoners considered for parole starting in 2010 through February 2015 have been a discouraging norm of recent years and an added expense to taxpayers. There may be some indication of a more progressive approach based on data for the past four months. During (March – June) 2015 a total of 47 prisoners were granted parole. On an annual basis this rate of parole grants would equal 188 prisoners annually or roughly a 5 percent rate for prisoners considered by the Parole Board. While summary data for the past two years has not been tabulated by VA CURE it does appear that the Board has started to change and be more open to granting paroles. While a change in policy toward parole for four months in 2015 is not a guarantee of progress it is encouraging that totals for the year may exceed 134 grants in 2011, 116 in 2012 and a miserable 77 in 2013. Bob Bohall

Recent Reports

Buying Access: How Corporations Influence Decision Makers at Corrections Conferences, Trainings and Meetings

A Report from In the Public Interest, August 2015

A major means for corporations that feed off the prison system to influence the administrators of that system is through use of conferences and meetings.

This report first details how companies spend millions of dollars sponsoring conferences, paying vendor fees, and providing other funding to gain access to professional corrections associations. This report then shows how corrections companies leverage this access in ways that can influence decision makers and benefit the companies' bottom lines. Considering corrections companies' track records of providing low-quality services that harm prisoners, communities, and taxpayers, the influence they exert through professional corrections associations is cause for concern.

According to this report, Corrections Companies get well acquainted with correctional system professionals by

- sending staff to professional association conferences
- leading training and workshops
- Hosting conference events
- Operating vendor booths
- And advertising on conference materials

The first section of this report profiles corrections companies that participate in professional corrections associations and highlights their track records of providing subpar service, often at high costs. The second section discusses how corrections companies spend millions through sponsorships, vendor fees, and other contributions to gain access to professional corrections associations. The third section shows how corrections companies use their access to these associations in ways that can influence corrections decision makers. The fourth section makes the case for transparency that allows the public to fully understand corrections companies' involvement in professional corrections associations.

Some Important Information from Virginia CURE

Our **meeting with the DOC has been postponed** till September sometime, so there is no report in this issue

We have decided to **raise the individual membership fee to \$20.00 and Family to \$30.00**. This is the first time we have raised membership dues in many years and will help us deal with increased costs, especially for copying! Prisoners will still pay \$2.00 or 5 stamps.

We would like to **send the newsletter electronically** to all those who have email addresses. If you have an email address, and are not sure that you have shared that address with us, please email vacure1@cox.net with your address. Emailing the newsletter saves postage. Newsletters will continue to be posted on the web site at www.vacure.org. Prisoners and those without emails will still receive paper copies. We are aware that many prisoners now have email addresses and will be investigating the possibility of sending via Jpay.

We continue to **look for volunteers** to help with answering mail, planning events, starting chapters and representing VACURE at various community events. If you have an interest in helping with some of these tasks, please let Carla or any Board member know by email, letter, or telephone.

Finally, we have maintained some members who have not sent in dues and are considering removing these people from our mailing list after January. We ask that you **think hard about when you last paid dues!** All membership fees are due in January, which we had thought would make it easier for people to remember. We can do a lot with just membership fees if everyone paid!

National News

Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act

In an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act of 2015 (S. 993/HR 1854). This bipartisan legislation, introduced by U.S. Senators Al Franken (D-MN) and John Cornyn (R-TX) and Congressmen Doug Collins (R-GA) and Bobby Scott (D-VA) recently aims to improve responses to people with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system by supporting and enhancing law enforcement training, mental health and veterans treatment courts, resources for corrections systems, and other collaborative approaches. The bill, which builds upon the success of the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act, now goes to a vote of the full U.S. Senate before moving to the House of Representatives.

The Safe, Accountable, Fair, and Effective (SAFE) Justice Act

Sponsors: Bobby Scott, (D-VA), Rep. James F. Sensenbrenner, (R-Wis)

The SAFE Justice Act is bipartisan legislation that puts lessons learned in the states to work at the federal level. The legislation protects public safety and reins in escalating corrections costs by –

Curtailing overcriminalization – requires public disclosure of regulatory criminal offenses; allows victims of regulatory over-criminalization to contact the inspector general; restores discretion to judges to determine to what extent manipulated conduct that results from fictitious law enforcement “stings” may be considered in court; protects against wrongful convictions; creates procedures to simplify charging and safely reduce pre-trial detention; and eliminates federal criminal penalties for simple drug possession in state jurisdictions.

Increasing use of evidence-based sentencing alternatives – expands eligibility for pre-judgment probation; promotes greater use of probation for lower-level offenders; and encourages judicial districts to open drug, veteran, mental health and other problem solving courts.

Concentrating prison space on violent and career criminals – clarifies original Congressional intent by examining the role an offender plays in a drug offense and targeting higher-level traffickers for mandatory minimums and recidivist enhancements; applies life sentences for drug trafficking only in the most egregious cases; allows eligible offenders to petition for resentencing under new trafficking laws; modestly expands the drug trafficking safety valve; clarifies that mandatory minimum gun sentences can only run consecutively when the offender is a true recidivist; and expands compassionate release for lower-risk geriatric and terminally-ill offenders.

Reducing recidivism – expands earned time to encourage more inmates to participate in individualized case plans designed to reduce their likelihood of reoffending; seeks to boost success rates of offenders on probation and post-prison supervision by mandating swift, certain and graduated sanctions for violations and offering credits for those who are compliant; creates a performance-incentive funding program; creates mental health and de-escalation training programs for prison personnel; and mandates the use of performance-based contracting for half-way houses.

Increasing government transparency and accountability – requires fiscal impact statements for sentencing and corrections bills; requires sentencing cost analyses to be disclosed in pre-sentencing reports; adds a non-voting federal defender rep. on the U.S. Sentencing Commission; requires the calculation of good time as Congress intended; requires federal agencies to report on corrections populations and recidivism rates, among other indicators; reauthorizes the Innocence Protection Act and directs the Attorney General to develop best practices to reduce wrongful convictions; and encourages prison savings to be invested in strengthening safety measures for law enforcement.

Bipartisan Summit on Fair Justice July 22, 2015 Washington DC

A groundbreaking conversation on criminal justice reform with lawmakers, leaders, and advocates.

The summit witnessed an effort on the part of both community leaders and lawmakers to find solutions to some complex problems pertaining to criminal justice. Attendees discussed areas where people on both sides of the aisle agree, including the overuse of solitary confinement, the injustice of current civil asset forfeiture laws, and the need to improve opportunities for those who have been incarcerated. Speakers included U.S. Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY), Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI), Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), the White House’s Director of the Office of Urban Affairs Roy Austin, and more. Speakers emphasized a key theme of the discussion—that we have a collective responsibility for our incarcerated citizens and for those citizens with criminal records. More information can be found at <http://www.coalitionforpublicsafety.org/what-fairjustice-looks-like/>, including video of the meeting.

CURE Chapters

Northern Virginia CURE
 Carla Peterson
 Carla4vacure@gmail.com
 3rd Thursday, 7:30 PM
 Arlington Unitarian Church
 4444 Arlington Blvd.
 Arlington VA 22204

Richmond CURE
 Julia Hebner
 juliabebner@comcast.net
 4th Sunday, 1:00 PM
 Friends Meeting House
 4500 Kensington Ave
 Richmond VA 23221

Hampton Roads CURE
 James Bailey
 jbailey383@aol.com
 3rd Tuesday, 7:00 PM
 Norview Baptist Church
 1127 Norview Ave.
 Norfolk VA 23513

Board of Directors Issue Representatives 2015

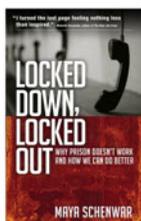
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Sandra Brandt
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Christa Pierpont
 Charlottesville
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Mary Anne Stone,
Vice Chairman
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Prison Industries
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 Rev. Bob Grimsley
Parole
 Bill Richardson

WE NEED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS!
 If you have an email address and are not receiving updates from Virginia CURE, please send a message to vacure1@cox.net. (vacure one)

Have You Renewed Your Membership?
 Please see membership form on back page.
 We can't do this without you.

Book Reviews:



Locked Down, Locked Out: Why Prison Doesn't Work and How We Can Do Better

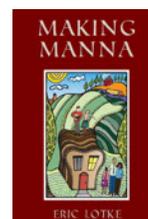
Maya Schenwar

In *Locked Down, Locked Out*, award-winning journalist Maya Schenwar looks at how prison tears families and communities apart, creating a rippling effect that touches every corner of our society. Through the stories of prisoners and their families, as well as her own family's experience of her sister's incarceration...

Making Manna, a novel

Eric Lotke

Libby Thompson is just fourteen years old when she flees her abusive home with her newborn son, Angel. Now they must build a life for themselves with smart choices and hard work, despite low wages and trouble with the law. This is a touching portrayal of how a family deals with the adversity the poor often face in America. Author Eric Lotke has worked in and around the criminal justice system for many years, written *The Real War on Crime*, and *2044: The Problem isn't Big Brother, it's Big Brother, Inc.* and is a member of Virginia CURE



Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants– Virginia, Inc.
Virginia CURE
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*Today's prisoners
 are tomorrow's neighbors*



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Use form for new memberships or to renew your membership for

Membership in Virginia CURE

Join Virginia CURE today and become a part of the effort to work for criminal justice reform and safety in our communities. Send dues payment to:

Virginia CURE, P.O. Box 2310, Vienna, Virginia 22183

Dues are payable January 1 on a yearly, non-prorated basis for current year. Prisoner members need to include state number on all communications to CURE.

Remember to send address changes.

Check type of membership

name _____

address _____
street/or p.o. apt.

_____ city _____ state _____ zip

e-mail _____ prisoner birthday _____

phone day () _____ evening () _____

fax () _____

- Prisoner* \$ 2.00
- Individual \$ 20.00
- Family \$ 30.00
- Sustaining \$ 50.00
- Organization \$100.00
- Life \$100.00
- Renewal

Please make checks payable to **Virginia CURE**. Contributions are tax deductible under the provisions of 501(c)(3), Internal Revenue Code.

*Prisoners may send five stamps.

Involvement: prisoner family friend professional volunteer

other _____ Institution _____
please specify

**Please feel free to reproduce
 this application**

Virginia CURE invites prisoners to submit original articles, poetry and artwork for consideration for publication. Virginia CURE reserves the right to edit submissions accepted for publication.

Virginia CURE will not return submissions unless prior arrangements are made. Send submissions to: Newsletter Editor, Virginia CURE, P.O. Box 2310, Vienna, Virginia 22183

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