

Is The Wisconsin Prison System Broken?

With the current rate of incarceration—one out of every 100 people in the United States are incarcerated—in Wisconsin, there is a good chance that even the best of families could lose a family member to the Wisconsin prison system.

When a court finds a person guilty of a crime, the judge orders, under the sentencing guidelines, the appropriate sentence as punishment.

The Department of Corrections duties are to implement the court order, provide housing, security, and programs to educate and rehabilitate prisoners and prepare them for a reasonable chance for parole so they may be reunited with their families and become productive citizens.

Most prisoners (at least in Wisconsin prisons), both old law prisoners and truth-in-sentence prisoners do not believe this is the case. Prisoners believe that they have been dehumanized and have become commodified—warehoused and used to fuel the huge Wisconsin prison industry. And it is a huge industry at the cost of human beings and a waste of taxpayer money.

When Wisconsin citizens talk about big government and how their tax money is being spent, they have to look no further than the Wisconsin Department of Corrections and the Wisconsin prison system to see just how big and how costly this system has become, and how much waste of taxpayer money.

As an industry, the prison system as is, benefits by incarcerating more people and to keep as many current prisoners—including old law prisoners who are eligible for parole—incarcerated as long as possible.

The more prisoners, the more guards and staff to be hired and more institutions to be built. All on the Wisconsin taxpayers dime. And the politicians can claim they're tough on crime, and at the same time, creating jobs. Again on the taxpayers dime. This is the waste of tax revenue that citizens have to realize.

Wouldn't it be more advantageous to the Wisconsin taxpayer and families that lost fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters stuck in this broken system and instead allow inmates to be paroled when eligible and deserving and become productive citizens again so they may provide for their families.

It would be a win-win for society. The former inmate now being a productive member of society and contributing to the tax coffer, while at the same time providing for the family so they could get off welfare. All while lowering the Wisconsin prison population and saving taxpayer money.

When available, most prisoners have completed their required programs and have been rehabilitated. They are no longer a threat to the public. Yet to keep the prisons at full capacity, old law prisoners who are eligible for parole are told by the Parole Board that, because of the seriousness of the offense sufficient time has not been served, or there is still an unreasonable risk to the public. Old law prisoners serving a set-year sentence are eligible for parole after serving 25% of their sentence. Prisoners serving a life sentence are eligible for parole after serving 13 years. The excuses to refuse parole are to justify keeping a person incarcerated and fuel the prison industry.

Mr. and Mrs. taxpayer. What about the incarcerated undocumented immigrants? Do you know that you are still footing the bill to keep them incarcerated long after they have finished all their required programs and long after a Federal Judge issued orders for these inmates to be deported. These immigrants would be deported out of the United States and no longer be a threat to society. Instead of deportation and saving Wisconsin taxpayer money, the Department of Corrections and the Parole Board are keeping them incarcerated to serve their entire sentence. Again, to fuel the Wisconsin prison industry and a big waste of taxpayer money.

Wouldn't this wasted taxpayer money be put to wiser use by improving our education system and providing our classrooms with the latest technology so our children are better prepared for the future? And in the long run, this would improve the economy, reduce the crime rate, and shed the reputation of Wisconsin having a bloated prison population.

But at the end of the day, it's up to you, the Wisconsin taxpayer, to decide how you want your hard earned money to be spent.