

## PROPOSAL TO THE STATE OF COLORADO

A possible long term solution to the understaffed conditions existing within the Department of Corrections in Colorado

It is no little secret that every prison in Colorado is severely understaffed. Not only in Colorado but the nation as well. Pulling a double shift, going home for eight hours, then back to work again has become so common, it's now the new norm. The overall effects on staff is exhaustion. It is only human nature that when people are over-worked and tired, they get short tempered and irritable. Professional training gets lost in heated moments. This makes for very dangerous situations when dealing with inmates who are always short tempered and irritable anyway.

Hiring new staff is too slow in coming for all the obvious reasons. Not too many people aspire a career as prison guards. Those who are hired, the retention rate is extremely low. The reality of working next to hundreds of men who have committed the worst kinds of crimes proves to be more than they can handle, so they leave out of fear for their own safety. So what's the answer?

The Department of Correction has suffered with this ongoing problem for decades and now seems to be spiraling even faster downward, yet real solutions evade all the powers that be. No amount of taxpayer dollars spent on exhausted employees working overtime, time and a half, or even double time is going to change the course we are now on. So again, I ask, what's the answer?

May I proffer this simple yet profound remark: "The source of the problem may be the solution to the problem."

Inmates! Incarcerated inmates!

You obviously need staff to guard the criminals or at least most of the criminals. However, there are individuals, 'many' in fact who have changed their mind set. Their way of thinking has shifted while incarcerated.

Some of us are actually capable of re-programming (as it were) ourselves, admit our guilt, recognize and acknowledge the harm we've done and alter our own life's course. Yet when we come up for parole, with dozens and dozens of Certificates of Completion in hand for every program under the sun, we get "set back", "deferred" for one, two, three and even five years at a time, justified with reasons like "hasn't done enough time", "takes little responsibility", "seriousness of the offense" (which will never change), and always "public safety concerns".

In other words, the Parole Board has been bottle-necking the discharge of parole eligible inmates for decades using the exact same reasons on virtually everyone regardless of the individual's accomplishments, i.e.; certificates and good institutional behavior, no or very few C.O.P.D. (Code of Penal Discipline) convictions.

In a nut shell - the State has it's employment problems; the Parole Board have their problems; and the overcrowded inmate population have their problems... getting paroled!

My proposal is this: "T-SERPP", an acronym for;  
"Tabled - State Employed Reintegration Parole Phase"

Through legislation a new statute would be created and added to the parole phase of every felony sentence. Instead of the usual unproductive denial, being thrown back into the stagnant warehouse of boredom, thereby increasing the potential for an altercation with staff due to feelings of being marginalized by the parole board, those of us who qualify would be offered by statutory mandate, the unprecedented opportunity to enter into this "new" phase of parole. The individual would either accept or reject this "one time" offer to become State employees working for the Department of Corrections, for the duration of the time period designated by the Parole Board.

Jobs that DO NOT have contact or control over other inmates.  
Jobs that ARE NOT related to or have access to any security devices.  
Jobs such as general maintenance i.e.; building and grounds maintenance. Delivery truck drivers, mechanics, graveyard shifts and a host of other "NON-INMATE CONTACT", jobs that are not generally known by inmates.

The Department of Corrections has already implemented programs such as "Honor Housing" at Sterling Correctional Facility, which have NO STAFF assigned to the units, the "Take Two" program, "SWIFT", and the new "Beacon at Skyline".

The "T-SERPP" statute could be the offspring of these other successful steps towards "Normalization" already taken. The unique difference is that the Parole Board would be mandated by statute to offer this phase of parole to those they would otherwise deny, then also, mandated by statute to parole the participants to the street and finish their parole if any parole time remains.

Inmates would live at the facility where the parole hearing took place unless there is a need or vacancies at another facility. Participants would live in "Honor Housing" and be allowed to purchase clothes and food from the streets, have their own cell phone (a.k.a. - tracking device), and other appliances that actually promote the concept of normalization, such as plates and silverware. The exception of course is that our residency would remain within the facilities.

Participants would continue to receive regular state pay while in the reintegration phase, but with a contractual bonus of \$1,000. per month for each month they successfully participate, payable in one payment upon release into society. If a participant is "tabled" for one year in this work phase, his/her bonus upon release would be \$12,000. If "tabled" for three years, the bonus would be \$36,000., etc.

If a participant regresses for any provable offense he/she automatically forfeits the bonus contract. Inmates entering society with a substantial financial backing would most likely succeed.

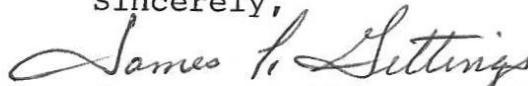
Under this proposal, the State receives ready willing and highly motivated employees. Employees who are not intimidated by prison surroundings and the unfortunate events that take place within them. Additionally beneficial is the probability that the participants are already acquainted with the staff they would be working with and at a fraction of the wages now being spent. The parole officer's job on the streets is lightened and the Parole Board would be paroling at the end of each individual's "given" phase. The inmates would have the statutory guarantee of parole and enough real money in their pockets to give them a realistic opportunity for success. This alone is a huge motivator and the trickle down effect would impact those just coming into the system to analyze their own future and behavior.

The full scope of this proposal and innovative vision is a win, win, win for everyone. The State gets it's much needed employees, the Parole Board has an alternative process that harmonizes with the normalization concept the the Department of Corrections has implemented by tabling inmates into the "T-SERPP" portion of their sentence while keeping inmates incarcerated. The inmates now get a real chance of successful reintegration.

A part of the mission statement D.O.C. has adopted is the safe reintegration of inmates back into society. What better way to accomplish this mission than to employ inmates with "real" benefits through a "real" normalization phase while still under incarcerated conditions.

I respectfully submit this proposal for consideration and offer my gratitude for spending your valuable time reading it.

Sincerely,



James T. Gettings 100895  
Fremont Correctional Facility  
July 1, 2022