**Update from the Chair:**

Hope everyone’s finding ways to stay warm in this frigid winter we’re having. If you haven’t heard from me for a while, it’s due to computer problems. Finally got a new computer, and now I’m having to relearn everything—very frustrating. At any rate, lots of things have been happening.

A **CURE meeting** in St. Louis scheduled for February 1 had to be cancelled due my illness and rather treacherous weather. Although I tried to contact everyone, I sincerely apologize to those who came to the U. City Library for the meeting. The meeting has been rescheduled:

**CURE Meeting in St. Louis**

**Friday, March 7**

**6 to 9 PM**

**University City Public Library, 6701 Delmar in the Loop.**

We’ll be discussing

* Legislation, including the Criminal Justice Lobby Day scheduled for April 9. Carpooling can be arranged for traveling to Jeff City.
* Sales Tax on prisoner canteen purchases—fighting back.
* Prisoner health care.
* Censorship of Missouri CURE newsletter. (Our winter newsletter has been held up at several prisons. Those we know of are PCC, WRDCC, SECC, MCC and FCC. In some prisons no prisoners have received them; in others, some have and some have not. They seem to be concerned about the letter describing the prisoner’s death at SECC. We are fighting this on more than one front.)
* Other important issues. Let us know your concerns.

**Kansas City** is arranging a meeting site for its next CURE meeting, hopefully this month. Let us know if you wish to attend.

**SALES TAX**

As you probably know, the MO DOC began charging sales tax on all prisoner canteen purchases on February 1. This is mean-spirited and wrong, if not illegal. We continue to fight this development. See the following legislation update for a bill that has been filed to halt the procedure. We are also working with Rep. Ellinger to address this issue.

**LEGISLATION UPDATE**

State Rep. Rory Ellinger has re-filed our bills regarding the 85% law. The new bill numbers are **House Bills 1318 and 1319** (same as former HB752 and 753, respectively). They are retroactive as written. The bills have been assigned to the Judiciary Committee, which is headed up by Rep. Stanley Cox. The House Speaker is still Rep. Tim Jones. Last year the bills didn’t even get assigned to a committee until the last day of the session, which prevented them from advancing. So this is some improvement, but we need to work to get them moving.

**Action Needed**: **Contact Cox with a copy to Jones, urging that the bills be scheduled for a committee hearing ASAP.** Once a hearing is scheduled, Rory will contact me. I’ll be testifying at the hearing at the Capitol in Jefferson City, but we need to fill the hearing room with supporters—that means YOU. We may not have much advance notice, but I’ll contact you just as soon as I’m notified. Meanwhile, you can check the House of Representatives website yourself to see if a hearing is scheduled.

**NOTE**: Prisoners at SCCC Licking along with their loved ones have started a website on ***Facebook*** called **ShowMeNo85**. Check it out.

Other bills of interest: Once again, the Kansas City Criminal Justice Task Force (KCCJTF) has gotten legislation introduced to alleviate the sentence of **LWOP** and other long sentences. **House Bill 1505** was introduced by Rep. Brandon Ellington of Kansas City. A twin bill was introduced in the Senate as **SB 681** by Kiki Curls of KCMO. These bills affect anyone who has served at least 15 years. We support these bills as well.

Numerous **anti-death penalty bills** have been introduced. I’m on the board of Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, and we support these bills as well. Missouri CURE is opposed to the death penalty and all mandatory minimum sentences.

Rep. **Lindell Shumake**, a Republican, has filed **HB 1666** to **stop the collection of** **sales tax** from prisoners. Please **contact him** with thanks and to show your support. Phone is 573-751-3613; email is Lindell.Shumake@house.mo.gov.

**Bad Bills**: Rep. **Rick** **Brattin** has reared his ugly head again. Last year he tried to institute hard labor for prisoners and take away all recreation. This year he wants to institute **firing squads** for executions (**HB 1470**) and **charge prisoners 50 cents for each medical visit (HB 1471).** You can call his office to express your views. Phone is 573-751-3783; email is Rick.Brattin@house.mo.gov. (FYI: He also wants to phase out the corporate income tax in Missouri.)

**UPCOMING EVENT**

Finally, if anyone’s interested, I’ll be speaking this **Sunday, February 9**, at the **Missouri History Museum, 5700 Lindell at DeBaliviere in Forest Park (St. Louis)**. I’ll be part of a panel speaking on Mass Incarceration: Slavery Revisited. The program goes from 2 to 4 PM.

For Justice,

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