

# STATEVILLE SPEAKS

Voices from the Inside • Summer 2012

## WELCOME TO THE JOHN HOWARD ASSOCIATION'S SPECIAL EDITION OF STATEVILLE SPEAKS

By John Maki  
Executive Director, John Howard Association

When the staff and administration of Stateville Speaks asked if the John Howard Association (JHA) would put together a special issue, I was thrilled. As executive director of the JHA, I saw this as an opportunity to explain the role of our organization and ask Stateville Speaks' readers to engage our work.

Of course, many of you probably already know about JHA. We are one of the country's oldest prison reform organizations and the only group that monitors the state's juvenile and adult correction system. Although we have been around for a while, we have gone through significant rebuilding over the past few years. During this period, JHA has



hired many new staff members and increased both the number of prison visits we conduct as well as our presence in the legislative halls of Springfield. As a result, JHA has strengthened its role as both a leader and lynchpin for statewide criminal justice reform.

In this edition of Stateville Speaks, I hope to offer readers a snapshot of JHA. In these pages, you will find a brief history of the organization, the executive summary of one of our recent prison reports, statements we have released in response to Governor Quinns' proposed prison closures, and a speech I gave at a forum entitled "Solutions to Illinois' Prison Over-Crowding Crisis." Finally, I ask that you follow our work and give us your feedback. You can write to us at the following address:

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## JHA: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

JHA was established in 1901 in Chicago as the Central Howard Association. The organization took its name from the founding father of penal reform, John Howard, an 18th century humanitarian who championed the cause of prison reform, first in his homeland of England, before expanding his mission throughout Europe, Scandinavia, Russia and Ireland.

Originally, the Central Howard Association was dedicated to three objectives: "To aid prisoners before and after release; to advocate improved laws for the prevention of crime; and to secure better Prisons, Reformatories and Jails."

In its early years, the organization served primarily as a probation and parole service for thousands of people leaving prison in "the Central Western States, including Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa." Along with this function, the Central Howard Association monitored the conditions of Illinois jails and prisons, as well as advocated for such reforms as replac-

ing determinate with indeterminate sentencing, abolishing the death penalty, offering prisoners educational programming, and paying inmates for their labor.

As county and state government took over probation and parole, the Central Howard Association transitioned into the prison watchdog organization we know today. By the time the Central Howard Association was renamed the John Howard Association in 1946, the organization had used its work in Illinois' jails and prisons to speak on penal reform at conferences, state and federal congressional hearings, and in publications, as well as on radio and television programs.

While JHA has always focused primarily on Illinois's juvenile and adult correction system, it also has traditionally played an active role in national corrections reform. For instance, through the 1970s and 1980s, JHA worked in more than 30 states, consulting on a wide variety of issues such as probation, parole, juvenile detention centers, inmate reception and classification, and prison educational

services.

In recent years, JHA has continued its tradition of monitoring Illinois' correctional facilities and advocating for humane, cost-effective criminal justice reform.

At present, JHA has three primary projects: the Juvenile Justice Project, the Prison Monitoring Project, and the Prison Response Team. Through our Juvenile Justice Project and Prison Monitoring Project, JHA recruits and trains citizen volunteers to inspect Illinois' juvenile and adult correctional facilities. A full-time employee runs each project. These staff members organize regular facility inspections, where they and their teams of volunteers interview inmates, staff, and administration as well as examine conditions and programming. During one year of visits, JHA typically monitors all of DJJ's facilities at least twice and between 16-20 of DOC's 27 correctional centers.

To prepare for prison visits and supplement our direct observations, JHA's staff members

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# PRISON REFORM BEGINS AND ENDS WITH US

## (SPEECH BEFORE “SOLUTIONS TO ILLINOIS’ PRISON OVER-CROWDING CRISIS,” 4/20/12)

Before we talk about solutions to the crowding problem in Illinois’ prisons, and where Illinois stands compared to other states in the country, I think it’s important to be clear about where we are today.

The population of Illinois Department of Corrections is at an all-time-high. Though we have a correctional system designed for about 34,000 men and women, we have over 48,000 people in our prisons. This number marks an almost 10 percent increase from where we were only two years ago, most of which stems from the 2010 suspension of Meritorious Good Time.

While these numbers are troubling, I don’t think they convey the conditions that actual prisoners and correctional staff face every day. My organization, the John Howard Association, is one of the oldest prison reform groups in the country. More importantly, we are the only independent organization in Illinois that visits the state’s juvenile and adult prison system. During the last two years, as Illinois has added almost 4,000 inmates to its prisons, we have visited and published reports on almost all of DOC’s 28 facilities. Our work is mission-driven. We believe that humane treatment and smart use of prison reform is a powerful tool to promote community safety. At the same time, we are politically neutral. We are concerned not with ideology—just with the truth. And so during our visits, we not only inspect conditions, but we also interview everyone we can, from inmates, staff, and administration. Based on these visits, we publish fact-based monitoring reports, which are fact-checked by the DOC and supplemented by research in criminal justice trends.

Let me give you a brief picture of what we have documented on these visits. With the exception of Tamms, every facility we have monitored suffers from overcrowding that is often coupled with critical understaffing, particularly in the areas of medical, security, and clerical.

However, without a doubt, the worst conditions are in the state’s medium and minimum-security facilities. For instance, in recent visits to Vandalia and Vienna correctional centers, which are two downstate, minimum-security prisons, the John Howard Association found inmates in deplorable conditions. These facilities were so crowded

that administrators had no choice but to house hundreds of minimum-security inmates in flooded basements and vermin-infested dormitories with broken windows, leaking pipes, and dilapidated roofs.

In these conditions, DOC houses mostly its low-level offenders. They are people like Jeremy, a veteran, who re-enlisted in the military after 9/11 and came home with a substance abuse problem. Jeremy’s addiction led him to an involvement in the criminal justice system and eventually a prison sentence at Vandalia. Jeremy’s mom wrote to John How-



ard shortly after our report on Vandalia. She wrote that “Jeremy just wants treatment, so he has a chance to live a better life,” and she worried that the conditions of Vandalia would only have a negative impact on her son’s already troubled mental and physical health. There are also people in DOC like Christian’s mom. Christian is a professor in the West Coast. He recently called JHA because his mom’s addiction to prescription drugs led her to be incarcerated in one of DOC’s female facilities. Christian told us he was worried because with Meritorious Good Time still suspended his mom was serving a longer sentence behind bars. And with potential closings of adult transitional centers, he told JHA that he was concerned that his mom, a good woman, would have to spend even more time inside a prison, rather than getting the treatment and supervision she needs through a work release program.

Now what’s important here is that most prisoners in DOC are just like Jeremy and Christian’s mom—men and women who have serious problems, who need to be held accountable for breaking the law, but who do not pose a significant threat to public safety and will not get the treatment they need inside the four corners of a prison cell.

These conditions lead to a terrible waste of human life and public resources—resources that could be used more effectively to promote public safety and control crime. Moreover, these kinds of conditions are dangerous for inmates—John Howard has seen spikes in inmate on inmate violence in many of the prisons we have visited. I want to point out these conditions are not just dangerous for inmates, but they are also dangerous to staff. This is a critical piece of prison crowding that is often ignored. Inmates and staff are part of the same community. They share a world. And when inmates suffer, so do staff.

While the presence of so many low-level offenders, people like Jeremy and Christian’s mom, inside prisons like Vandalia and Vienna is tragic, it also represents an opportunity. As Illinois has added more prisoners to its system in the past two years, states across the country, like Mississippi, Ohio, Kansas, and Texas, are finding safe and cost-effective ways to reduce their prison populations by focusing precisely on these kinds of low-level offenders.

The reforms that these states have been implemented have been comprehensive, bipartisan, and based on smart and rigorous analysis. They include front-end reforms, like Texas mandating probation for low-level drug offenses and Kansas creating mandatory drug treatment programs for non-violent drug offenders. They also include so-called back-end initiatives like Mississippi and Ohio’s expansion of the ways which inmates can earn time off their sentences and Kansas’s reform of its parole system that have led to fewer revocations. Together, these reforms have helped stabilize and decrease prison populations, control crime, and, just as importantly, saved states literally billions of taxpayer dollars.

Given Illinois’ bleak financial situation and the crowding in our prisons, it is clear we cannot afford to ignore the lessons of criminal justice reform.

So how do we get there? Let me conclude by offering three suggestions.

First, we need to find a safe and cost-effective replacement for Meritorious Good Time. This is essential. Inmates need a good-conduct-credit program to earn time off their sentences, correctional staff and administra-

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# JHA SUPPORTS GOVERNOR QUINN'S PROPOSAL TO CLOSE TAMMS (RELEASED 4/2/12)

Across the country, states are using the current economic crisis as an opportunity to pursue cost-effective criminal justice reform. In this spirit, Governor Pat Quinn has proposed closing eight Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities, including Tamms Correctional Center (Tamms), the state's supermax prison. As the only independent group that regularly monitors Illinois' prisons, the John Howard Association (JHA) believes that Tamms is unnecessary to protect the safety of inmates, staff, and the general public and therefore supports the Governor's proposal and DOC Director Godinez's corresponding recommendations for closure.

It costs Illinois' taxpayers more than \$26 million a year to hold roughly 180 maximum-security and 180 minimum-security inmates at Tamms. Per inmate, this translates into almost \$65,000 per year—the highest cost of any DOC facility. As DOC has been asked to cut more than \$110 million from its fiscal year 2013 budget, an almost 10 percent reduction, it is difficult to justify spending such excessive resources to confine such a small population.

Tamms was originally built to isolate the state's most dangerous prisoners through long-term isolation. While DOC must be able to prevent especially dangerous and disruptive inmates from causing harm, the agency does not need Tamms to accomplish this important goal. Over the past two years, JHA has visited nearly all of DOC's 27 facilities, including two trips to Tamms and multiple visits to the state's maximum-security prisons. We found that all segregation inmates in DOC, whether at Tamms, Menard, Stateville, or Pontiac Correctional Centers, are treated virtually the same. They spend 22 to 23 hours a day in their cells, with their movement severely limited and aggressively monitored by correctional officers. The main difference between Tamms and other maximum-security facilities is that Tamms' model of segregation permits almost no human contact, which requires higher staffing levels and thus a significantly higher cost of incarceration. For these reasons, JHA is confident in Director Godinez's statement that Tamms' inmates can be safely absorbed and managed by other facilities.

If Illinois does not close Tamms, the



state will face the certainty of substantial long and short-term costs that taxpayers cannot afford. Throughout the country, courts are discrediting the use of long-term isolation. While there have been some efforts to reform Tamms, most notably DOC's 2009 Ten-Point Plan, they have failed to halt similar attacks. The longer Tamms remains open, the more resources Illinois will have to devote to protect it from these kinds of legal challenges.

More immediately, the fact that Tamms requires such high staffing levels is a problem because DOC's limited resources are shrinking and desperately needed at other facilities. With the exception of Tamms, every prison JHA has visited in recent years suffers from chronic understaffing. For instance, while Tamms employs approximately 15 nurses and one part-time psychiatrist to care for fewer than 200 maximum-security inmates, Vienna Correctional Center, a male minimum-security prison, has only 10 nurses and one part-time psychiatrist to care for a population of more than 1,600 inmates. Similarly, whereas Tamms has two full-time teachers and no waiting lists for their GED program, Lincoln Correctional Center, a female medium security facility of about 1,000 inmates, had only one GED teacher and prohibitively long waiting lists. The closure plan, as outlined by Director Godinez, will help alleviate

this problem by reassigning Tamms' staff to other facilities where their assistance is badly needed.

While the Governor's proposal to close Tamms is supported by strong fiscal arguments, his decision is not just about cutting costs. Since Tamms opened in 1998, a growing body of research and the experience of prison systems in other states like Mississippi and Colorado have shown that the practice of long-term isolation is psychologically damaging and does not serve a legitimate correctional purpose. By closing Tamms, Illinois will join this growing consensus and take a critical step toward reforming the state's prison system to the benefit of public safety, security, and the state's fiscal health.

**Update:** On May 31, the final day of Illinois' spring 2012 legislative session, the General Assembly approved a budget that would keep Tamms open on the condition that it would be repurposed as a medium or minimum-security facility. As of the publication of this edition of *Stateville Speaks*, the Governor has not endorsed the repurposing of Tamms, but suggested that he was open to the idea, telling reporters: "I made a decision that I thought the super maximum-security mission of that prison was not one that we could continue and afford and I think it could be done in a different way."

# MONITORING VISIT TO VIENNA CORRECTIONAL CENTER 9/27/2011

The John Howard Association (JHA) visited Vienna Correctional Center (Vienna) on September 27, 2011. It is a male minimum-security prison located in Vienna, Illinois about six hours south of Chicago.

## Key Observations:

- As of November 25, 2011, Vienna is Illinois' most overcrowded prison. It is designed to hold 685 inmates, but houses almost 1,700 men, which makes it about 240 percent over its design capacity.
- Most of Vienna's inmates serve less than one year at the facility.
- If Governor Quinn restored Meritorious Good Time, the early-release program he suspended in late 2009, Vienna could potentially empty its most overcrowded, dilapidated housing areas.
- At the time of JHA's visit in September 2011, Vienna had only one mental health professional to meet the needs of almost 1,700 inmates.
- Approximately 12 percent of Vienna's population is 50 or older. The racial-ethnic makeup of Vienna's population is roughly 67 percent African American, 21 percent White, 11 percent Hispanic, and approximately 1 percent Native American and Asian combined.

## Executive Summary

On September 27, 2011, JHA visited Vienna Correctional Center (Vienna). Vienna is a Level Six minimum-security adult male facility that houses mostly low-level offenders. It also operates Dixon Springs-Impact Incarceration Program (IIP), a co-ed boot camp. Located on the fringes of Shawnee National Forest and adjacent to Shawnee Correctional Center, a male minimum-security prison, Vienna is about 350 miles south of Chicago and 170 miles west of Nashville, Tennessee.

Vienna represents the best of what Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC) can be and the worst of what it has become through a lack of vital resources and severe overcrowding.

For most of its more than 40-year history, Vienna was widely regarded as Illinois' most successful and innovative prison. It was designed to function as a small town where inmates could learn how to become responsible citizens. Until a little over 10 years ago, the facility did not have a fence, and inmates did not wear uniforms.

Education was critical to Vienna's rehabilitative mission. The prison's education and vocational program rivaled—and in some cases surpassed—the area's best technical high schools and post-secondary institutions. In fact, Vienna's programming was so good that local area residents took classes in the prison with inmates.

During this period, Vienna embodied a mutually beneficial relationship between prison and community that went far beyond the typical economic support prisons provide to their local economies. Up until the mid-1990s, Vienna inmates volunteered in the local community, umpired baseball games on weekends, and even ran an Emergency Technician Program, which supplied the surrounding area with a 24-hour ambulance service staffed by specially trained inmates.

Today Vienna has gone from being Illinois' most innovative and successful prison to its most overcrowded. Although the facility was designed to hold 685 inmates, it now houses almost 1,700 people. Years of neglect and lack of essential maintenance and upkeep have made these conditions worse, as mostly low-level offenders are crammed into dilapidated buildings infested with mice and cockroaches.

While Vienna's staff and administration are acutely aware of the problems they face, they believe if given the appropriate resources



## Vienna Correctional Center - Vital Statistics

Population: 1,626

Rated Capacity: 685

Average Annual Cost per Inmate: \$20,714

Average Age: 35

Source: DOC, 12/11/2011

they could turn the facility around. They point to current renovations, which include a desperately needed re-roofing project. They also note how last spring, when the region faced some of the worst flooding it has ever seen, inmates and staff volunteered and helped prepare more than 400,000 sandbags, which saved countless homes and buildings from serious damage.

At JHA's meeting with Vienna's administration, a senior member aptly described the current state of the facility: "Vienna is a good place with a proud history in need of help." Most urgently, Vienna needs the help of the governor and the legislature to enact legislation and support programs that will safely reduce the state's prison population, which has reached almost 50,000 inmates, a record high. In particular, Illinois needs to find more cost-effective alternatives to incarceration for low-level, non-violent offenders who have swelled minimum-security prisons like Vienna at great cost and little benefit to taxpayers.

With a reduction in population, DOC could return Vienna to a model, re-entry prison that inmates could earn their way into through good behavior. In so doing, Illinois would be following the path of states like Texas, Ohio, and New York that have proved that a combination of sentencing reform, alternatives to incarceration, and rehabilitation can help safely decrease prison populations and save taxpayer money.

## Recommendations:

1. The Illinois Governor and General Assembly must reduce the prison population through sentencing reform, enact a safe replacement for Meritorious Good Time, and provide Vienna and other DOC facilities with the funding and staffing needed to meet the population's basic medical and mental health needs. If such action is not taken, it is all but inevitable that that this issue will end up being litigated in the courts.

2. Assuming elected officials find ways to safely reduce the state's

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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Who can we contact for legal information or help with our individual cases?

Every year JHA receives thousands of letters and phone calls from inmates and their families and loved ones. These communications are vital. We respond to every phone call or letter we receive and offer any help we can provide. We also use the communications we receive to track issues of concern, which inform our prison monitoring and advocacy efforts.

One of the most common requests we receive is for legal assistance. Although JHA's program staff are all lawyers, the organization does not litigate civil or criminal cases. We sometimes refer people to lawyers, depending on our analysis of the claim, but mostly we explain how prison litigation works. Since President Clinton signed the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA) into law in 1996, it has become extremely difficult to get prison-based civil rights cases into court. Among other things, PRLA requires inmates to exhaust all administrative remedies before bringing claims to the court. This means that before inmates can successfully pursue legal relief, they must first use all of the methods in DOC to address their issue. This is a problem because not all inmates know all of the administrative avenues they must pursue, and oftentimes by the time inmate exhaust all of the administrative remedies, the statute of limitations has expired on their claim, so it's too late to file.

JHA believes that PRLA is not only a frustrating law, but that also stifles legitimate complaints. While we cannot bypass PRLA's requirements, we can help explain the necessary processes and requirements both in and outside of prison, which is what we do when inmates write to us.

## What can you tell us about SB 2621?

SB 2621 is a piece of criminal justice reform legislation that passed the Illinois Senate and House in the spring 2012 legislative session. This is a significant victory for both JHA, which was one of the chief advocates for the bill, and for safe, smart, and cost-effective prison reform. If Governor Quinn signs this bill into law, it will establish a responsible early release program to ease prison overcrowding that will replace Meritorious Good Time (MGT), the 30-year-old good conduct credit program that was suspended in early 2010.

## What will SB 2621 do?



As of May 2012, Illinois housed more than 48,000 inmates in a prison system designed for about 34,000. While almost every facility struggles with its population, the worst crowding is in the state's minimum and medium security prisons, which house mostly low-level offenders. This kind of crowding endangers not only inmates, but also the thousands of staff that work in the state's correctional institutions.

SB 2621 will address these problems by authorizing the Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC) to award up to 180 days of Sentence Credits to low-level offenders for completing educational programs, taking part in community service, or demonstrating good behavior. This is a standard tool that prison systems across the country use to control behavior and encourage participation in programs that reduce recidivism.

## How is SB 2621 different from MGT?

SB 2621 will mandate several key improvements designed to protect public safety, including the following:

- SB 2621 will authorize DOC to consider an inmate's entire criminal history when awarding Sentence Credits, which includes prior offenses, the "facts and circumstances of the inmate's holding offenses," and the "potential for rehabilitation." Under MGT, such consideration was impossible.
- SB 2621 will authorize DOC to award Sentence Credits for completing a broad range of programs in county and state custody, from GED classes to life skills courses. MGT recognized only a limited number of programs and excluded county jail programming from consideration.

- SB 2621 will require DOC to publish a public report detailing how it awards Sentence Credits. This requirement will provide an exceptional level of transparency to ensure DOC is awarding Credits in a way that is consistent with the bill's intent and the promotion of public safety. MGT lacked a comparable level of transparency.

## Will every inmate be eligible for 180 days of Sentence Credits?

No. While SB 2621 will authorize DOC to consider offenders' criminal histories in awarding Sentence Credits, it will also limit and exclude the following offenses (as was the case under MGT): No persons who are committed for the following offenses shall be awarded more than 90 days of Sentence Credits during a term of incarceration: first degree murder, reckless homicide while under the influence of alcohol or any other drug, aggravated kidnapping, kidnapping, aggravated criminal sexual assault, criminal sexual assault, deviate sexual assault, aggravated criminal sexual abuse, aggravated indecent liberties with a child, indecent liberties with a child, child pornography, heinous battery, aggravated battery of a spouse, aggravated battery of a spouse with a firearm, stalking, aggravated stalking, aggravated battery of a child, endangering the life or health of a child, cruelty to a child, or narcotic racketeering.

No persons who are serving a sentence for a conviction for any of the following offenses committed on or after August 20, 1995, shall be awarded any Sentence Credits: first degree murder, attempt to commit first degree murder, solicitation of murder for hire, intentional homicide of an unborn child, aggravated criminal sexual assault, criminal sexual assault, aggravated kidnapping, aggravating battery with a firearm, heinous battery, aggravated battery of a senior citizen, aggravated battery of a child, habitual juvenile offenders, violent juvenile offenders; or home invasion, armed robbery, aggravated vehicular hijacking, aggravated discharge of a firearm, or armed violence with a category I weapon or category II weapon, when the court has entered a finding that the conduct leading to conviction for the offense resulted in great bodily harm to a victim.

**How long will it be before DOC is ready to**  
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## REFORM

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tors need this as a tool to control behavior—but ultimately, Illinois needs a safe way to decrease our prison population. If we don't, we might soon find ourselves in the situation that California has found itself in, with the Supreme Court declaring its prisons unconstitutionally overcrowded and a judicial mandate to release more than 30,000 inmates in the next year.

The second suggestion, as we look to what other states have done; we need to bolster and expand on the existing policies and practices in Illinois that are helping to control crime. This includes the three programs mandated by the bipartisan Illinois Crime Reduction Act of 2009, probably the most ambi-

tious criminal justice reform package Illinois has ever seen. These programs are Adult Redeploy, a diversion program you'll hear more about in our panels, the Sentence Policy Advisory Council, a non-partisan group of stakeholders tasked with informing sentencing and correction policy decisions, and the Risk Assets Needs Assessment tool, this is a critical tool that will help DOC and Illinois move from sentenced-based form of creating policy for offenders, which research show is not effective, to a risk-based way of thinking about offenders, which will lead to better results and smarter use of our resources.

And finally, we need to create a constituency for criminal justice reform. Really, this is the most important step—the thing that

everything else depends on. The problem we face is not a lack of solutions. The problem is that we lack the political will. This is not just an issue for Springfield—it begins and ends with us. We need to convince our legislators that we want them to be both tough and smart on crime; that we'll have the backs of elected leaders who have the courage to support criminal justice reform; and that we will turn out against politicians who keep doubling down on the failed over-reliance on mass incarceration.

I want to thank you all for coming here today, to be a part of this growing Coalition for Prison Reform.

Now, let's get organized and get to work.

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## HISTORY

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continually review our database of inmate letters and phone calls for reoccurring issues and trends. Through this process, staff members find particular inmates with specific issues to interview during our inspections. Every year, JHA's Prison Response Team, staffed by a part-time volunteer who has been with the organization for more than 10 years, receives more than 3,000 letters and phone calls from inmates and their family. After the volunteer responds to every call and letter the organization receives, a part-time employee catalogues the issue and response in the organizations' communications database.

Following each monitoring visit, JHA publishes a 15-20 page critical report on the facility to a constantly expanding listserv of almost 2,000 government officials, stakeholders, decision makers, journalists, advocates, concerned citizens, and affected community members. These reports lead directly to changes and improvements at the facility and system level. They also inform the organiza-

tion's policy work and advocacy that focuses on improving prison conditions, increasing vocational and educational opportunities for prisoners, and decreasing the number of people who are sent to prison through alternatives to incarceration, sentencing and parole reform, and more effective re-entry policies.

Alongside JHA's monitoring of DOC and DJJ, the organization inspected Cook County's juvenile and adult detention centers. As stipulated in a consent decree to address eighth amendment violations, JHA was the court appointed monitor of Cook County Jail. JHA was initially appointed the monitor in the early 1980s. This work ended when the consent decree was terminated in 2009. JHA played a similar role in the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, where its ongoing monitoring efforts helped lead to a civil rights lawsuit brought to protect detained youth.

Finally, for the past several years, JHA volunteers have also monitored the PRB as part

of our efforts to bring about more effective parole practices for the remaining inmates who are serving indeterminate sentences. (In 1978, Illinois abolished indeterminate sentencing and imposed determinate or fixed sentencing laws. Those sentenced before this change must appear before the PRB, who determine whether they shall be released.) As part of this project, JHA has trained pro bono lawyers to represent these inmates before the PRB, instilling fairness and more process into the agency's proceedings.

For more than 110 years, JHA has remained a small organization, with a core group of stalwart volunteers devoted to cost-effective prison reform. Our staff works long hours, for little pay because we love what we do, and we believe that treating inmates fairly humanely is not only the right thing to do, but that it is also in the public interest to maintain a criminal justice system that honors Illinois Constitutional mandate to restore "offenders to useful citizenship."

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## VIENNA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

prison population: DOC should consider investing in Vienna and making it into a premiere reentry prison which inmates must earn their way into.

3. As soon as it can feasibly do so, Vienna's administration should remove inmates from the second and third floor of Building 19, the prison's most decrepit, overcrowded living quarters.

4. Vienna should consider using the segregation bullpen to house inmates only for

short periods of time due to the fact that it is unfit for long-term living.

5. To address the needs of its population, Vienna needs more mental health staff.

6. DOC and Vienna should continue its efforts to rehab the facility.

7. As recent studies have shown that prison visits reduce inmates' likelihood of recidivating, Vienna should improve its visiting area, making it more child and family friendly.

**Update:** On June 14th the Uptown Peoples Law Center, assisted by attorneys from Latham & Watkins filed a federal lawsuit against the "overcrowded and deplorable conditions" in Vienna Correctional Center. According to the lawsuit, among other issues, the conditions are in violation of Eighth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution (cruel and unusual punishment and standards of decency, etc.). We will watch this case as it unfolds and follow up in our upcoming issues.

# FAQs

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## start awarding Sentence Credits?

Before SB 2621 goes to the Governor, it must be certified by both the House and Senate. Once it is certified, the bill must be sent to the Governor within 30 days. When the Governor receives the bill, he will then have 60 days to sign it.

Once SB 2621 is signed into law, DOC will have to create and promulgate new administrative rules that will govern its application.

## How many inmates would receive Sentence Credits?

As of now, that number is unclear, but it likely will be a smaller class of people than those who received MGT, based on the new factors DOC will have to consider when awarding or denying credits.

## Who supported SB 2621?

SB 2621 had significant bi-partisan support in the General Assembly. In the Senate, it passed 55-1 and was sponsored by Sen. Kwame Raoul (D), Thomas Johnson (R), Michael Noland (D), John J. Millners (R), Mattie Hunter (D), Pamela J. Althoff (R), Anazette R. Collins (D), and William Delgado (D). While he was not an official sponsor, Senate President Cullerton played an essential role in passing the bill.

In the House, SB2621 passed 68-50 and was sponsored by Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie (D), Jim Sacia (R), Kelly M. Cassidy (D), Arthur Turner (D), Kimberly du Buclet (D), Rita Mayfield (D), La Shawn K. Ford (D), Esther Golar (D), Eddie Lee Jackson, Sr. (D), Scott E. Penny (D), Charles E. Jefferson (D), Karen May (D), Naomi D. Jakobsson (D), and Monique D. Davis (D).

Supporting organizations include: John Howard Association, Metropolis Strategies, ACLU of Illinois, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, A Safe Haven, Appleseed Foundation, Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers (CLAIM), Protestants for the Common Good, Roosevelt University's Institute for Metropolitan Affairs, Roosevelt's Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy, Safer Foundation, TASC, Youth Advocate Programs, Coalition for Prison Reform, Illinois Prison Talk, and League of Women Voters of Illinois.

# IN MEMORIAM

The entire staff at *Stateville Speaks* would like to offer our deep felt sympathy to **Sikira Harris** on the loss of your mother this past year. We are also saddened that you were unable to attend her funeral service. Again, please accept our condolences for both you and your family for your loss.

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Our condolences go to the family and friends of **Darnell Palacio** who passed away this last year at Stateville C.C. Our sympathies are with you all.

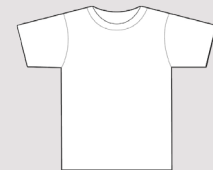
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We at Stateville Speaks would like to offer our condolences to friends and family of **Robert Thomas**, on his passing, at Stateville C.C.

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Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to the family and friends on their loss with the passing of **Willie Atkins** at Stateville. Please accept our condolences.

## T-SHIRT DESIGN CONTEST ENDS AUG. 1



Calling all inmate artists, cartoonists, satirists, poets, and essayists! Design a *Stateville Speaks* t-shirt or logo that increases awareness and starts a dialogue about prison. Money raised from shirt sales will help cover our printing costs. We will show the best entries and announce the winner in our Fall issue. Please send a copy of your artwork (we can't return originals). Deadline is August 1st.

## STATESVILLE SPEAKS

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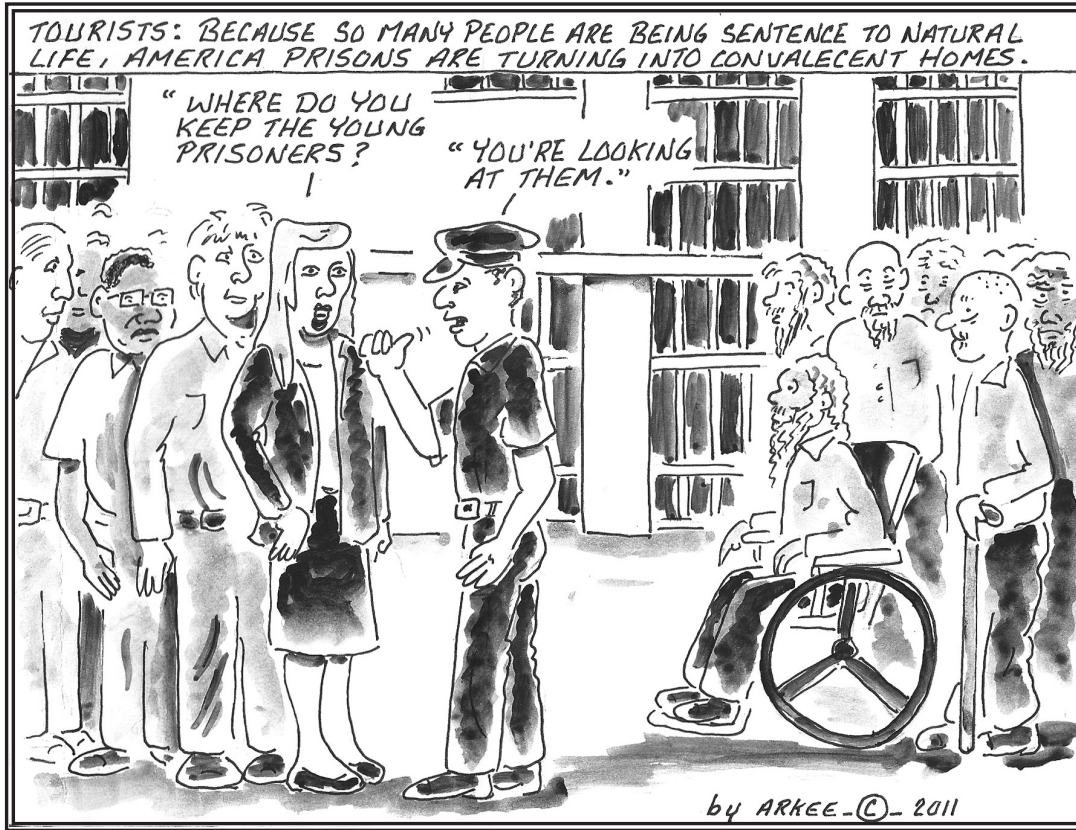
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