

Harrisburg Patriot (03-01-2012)

[http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2012/03/attorney\\_general\\_linda\\_kelly\\_a.html](http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2012/03/attorney_general_linda_kelly_a.html)

Attorney General Linda Kelly announces charges against 13 people, 1 Camp Hill inmate in drug ring  
DONALD GILLILAND

Damion Floyd is one of the dimmer bulbs in the marquee of illicit businessmen.

After being sent to state prison last year for transporting cocaine from Baltimore to Altoona, Floyd tried to keep his \$2 million-a-year drug distribution ring running from behind bars, investigators in the state attorney general's office say.

They say they have recordings of Floyd directing operations over the phone at the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill, which was in on the investigation.

Those conversations — between Floyd and his girlfriend — were interrupted every few minutes by the standard prison phone automated announcement: "This call is subject to monitoring and recording."

"They actually had to wait for the message to finish" before resuming their conversations, said Nils Frederiksen, a spokesman for the attorney general's office.

On Thursday, Attorney General Linda Kelly announced charges against 14 people, including Floyd, that aim to dismantle the entire operation from the Baltimore supplier to Blair County street dealers.

Kelly said the effort involved cooperation between her office, Blair County law enforcement, the state Department of Corrections, Baltimore law enforcement and federal drug enforcement.

When Floyd entered prison last year, investigators say, Jermaine "Shawn" Samuel, a recent parolee, stepped up to fill his role. However, people lower in the distribution ring were upset with Samuel's performance and began sending letters of complaint to Floyd at the prison in Lower Allen Twp.

State prisons also monitor inmate correspondence.

Floyd's actions were brazen and "not so smart," said Randy Feathers, regional director of the attorney general's Bureau of Narcotics Investigation in State College, which covers the Altoona region.

Feathers said investigators believe Floyd began directing operations practically from the moment he entered the Camp Hill prison, where he was initially sent for

diagnostic assessment. He has since been transferred to the State Correctional Institution Pine Grove in Indiana County.

Floyd's conversations — and intercepted cellphone calls of others in the ring — led investigators to Rodney "Rocco" Williams, the alleged Baltimore supplier, and to Brian Stroh, an Altoona bar owner who was renting out a room over his Corner Bar and Grille that the ring is accused of using as a distribution facility.

All but one of the 14 charged were in custody Thursday, and Kelly said Stroh's Corner Bar and Grille has been "seized."

Officials named the investigation — with irony intended — "Operation Last Call."

"Not only was it the last call at the Corner Bar and Grille, it's the last call these folks are going to be making for a while," Frederiksen said.

And some in the ring were accustomed to making lots of calls.

Officials had wiretaps on the phones of brothers Stephen and Kenneth Piner.

In the 21 days between Sept. 15 and Oct. 5 last year, they intercepted 17,719 calls on the brothers' phones.

That's an average of one call every 3½ minutes, day and night, for both men.

Frederiksen said the charges are significant for the midstate because the distribution system came up from Baltimore, hit the turnpike near Harrisburg and went west.

That car that cuts you off might not be just a rude driver, he said, it might be a cocaine runner in a hurry with a car full of drugs or money.

"This is a huge crossroads for drug trafficking," he said.

These charges are also significant because it takes out the whole ring, he said.

"This is organized crime," said Frederiksen. "It's not 'Goodfellas', but it's organized crime. The organization is stronger than any one individual, and if you don't take the whole organization out, what's left can continue to survive."

Frederiksen said it will be a matter of time before someone else fills the void, "but it's not like the next franchisee gets a clean start. ... We'll be there waiting for the next one."

NOTE: Jermaine Samuel was paroled from SCI Pittsburgh.  
Kenneth Piner was at SCI Laurel Highlands.

Stephen Piner was at SCI Greene.  
Michael Pendleton was at SCI Camp Hill.

Tracy Piner was at SCI Cambridge Springs.

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Altoona Mirror (03-02-2012)

<http://www.altoonamirror.com/page/content.detail/id/558648/Multimillion-dollar-cocaine-ring-busted.html?nav=742>

Multimillion-dollar cocaine ring busted

Ring called the largest drug-trafficking organization in Blair County history  
Greg Bock and Mark Leberfinger

LEMOYNE - An Altoona bar at the center of a suspected multimillion dollar cocaine ring broken up by police in November has had its last call if state drug prosecutors get their way.

"It's seized," Pennsylvania Attorney General Linda Kelly said Thursday about the The Corner Bar & Grill, 1001 Eighth Ave., where local and state narcotics investigators believe up to 2.5 kilograms of cocaine each week were packaged and distributed for sale on the streets of Blair County.

The ring raked in an estimated \$2 million for the drug in the last year, Kelly said. Officials are calling the ring the biggest drug-trafficking organization in Blair County history.

According to the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, the liquor license for The Corner Bar & Grill is in the hands of the state Attorney General's Office, and the man who runs the bar under a limited liability corporation is in jail on multiple drug charges.

Brian "Bubba" Stroh, 37, of 933 Carlee Lane, the principle of Bubba LLC, the corporation that owns the bar was charged Thursday along with 13 people police contend operated a sophisticated cocaine trafficking organization between Baltimore and Altoona.

The investigation dubbed "Operation Last Call" included Blair County, state, federal and Baltimore authorities, Kelly said.

While police believe Stroh allowed and even encouraged the use of the bar, as well as an upstairs apartment, to be used as the ring's Altoona headquarters, they said the drug business was actually under the direction of convicted cocaine trafficker Damion "Benny" Floyd, 33, an inmate at State Correctional Institution at Pine Grove in Indiana County.

Floyd is serving a four- to eight-year state prison sentence after pleading guilty to cocaine charges stemming from a Sept. 1, 2010, state police traffic stop in Bedford County.

He allegedly used his girlfriend, Natasha Q. Miller, 30, of 428 Fifth Ave. and Jermaine "Shawn" Samuel, 32, of 105 16th St. to run the operation from his prison cell, a statewide investigating grand jury found.

Despite signs in the prisons, as well as recorded reminders that remind inmates that phone calls are recorded, Floyd talked about the cocaine business with Miller and others, Regional Director Randy Feathers of the Attorney General's Bureau of Narcotics Investigation said.

Letters between the couple support the allegations were also found in Floyd's cell and Miller's home, the grand jury noted.

State drug agents also intercepted a call on Oct. 18, 2011, where Floyd told Samuel that Stroh, also known as "Big Clunka" and "Big Homie," had sent him a letter while he was at SCI Camp Hill telling Floyd the cocaine sales at the bar were attracting attention, the grand jury pointed out.

Miller, Samuel and street-level dealers including Altoona brothers Stephen "Buck" Piner, 52, and Kenneth J. Piner Sr., 51, were arrested Nov. 4. Those arrests came after one of the organization's alleged drug couriers, Shonda Hicks-Brown, and another woman were pulled over on Interstate 99 as they returned to Blair County with 13.25 ounces of cocaine, police said.

Kenneth Piner was arraigned about 1:30 p.m. via video conference between Magisterial District Judge Craig Ormsby's courtroom in Roaring Spring and the Altoona police station.

Piner was already in Blair County Prison in lieu of a total of \$600,000 cash bail from his November arrest.

"That's \$600,000 that I'll never post," he told Ormsby.

His bail was about to climb significantly higher.

Piner said his attorney, R. Thomas Forr, filed a motion in Blair County Court last month asking for a bail modification.

"Whatever the judge decides, that's for that case," Ormsby said. "I've got to deal with what we've got here."

Piner did ask whether he would have 10 bails because of the 10 charges filed against him.

"No. It will be one bail [because it is one case], but that doesn't mean you'll be happy with my bail," Ormsby said.

Because of the nature of the 10 charges including corrupt organizations and possession with intent to deliver, Ormsby sent Piner back to the county lockup in lieu of \$700,000.

It makes Piner's total bail \$1.3 million.

The Piner brothers are longtime drug dealers, Blair County Assistant District Attorney Pete Weeks said.

"Stephen and Kenny Piner have been operating in the Blair County area for more than two decades," Weeks said.

Stephen Piner's son, Glenn S. Piner II, 27, of 1306 18th Ave., and Stephen and Kenneth Piner's sister, Tracey C. Piner, 42, of Evergreen Manor, were also charged.

The investigation was "very much a cooperative investigation" with Altoona police and the Blair County Drug Task Force conducting controlled buys from the Piner brothers that ultimately led to court-approved phone taps by state narcotics agents, Kelly said.

The Baltimore Police Department and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration with Pennsylvania law enforcement in identifying and arresting the group's alleged Baltimore connection, Rodney "Rocco" Williams, 35, who was arrested in Baltimore and brought to Blair County on Nov. 17.

The Camp Hill prison staff worked with investigators to gather crucial evidence at the prison, Kelly said.

According to the grand jury presentment in the case, the monitoring of the Piner brothers' two phones in September and October led police to get enough evidence to tap Samuel's two cellphones.

Most of the 14 charged in the alleged cocaine ring have prior arrests for drugs, Feathers added.

Feathers said the delay in charging the suspects, most of whom were charged in November and are in jail awaiting trial, was due to the fluid nature of a large-scale drug investigation.

"At the time, in November, we were not quite ready to bring charges [against Floyd]," Feathers said, noting that the grand jury investigation remains ongoing with more arrests coming.

By Thursday night, all but one suspect had been arraigned, police said.

Shirley Thompson, 61, of 114 Sixth Ave. could not be located, Altoona police said.

Preliminary hearings are scheduled March 9 before Ormsby at Altoona Central Court.

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Pittsburgh Post Gazette (03-01-2012)

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/12061/1213726-100-0.stm#ixzz1nxy7bOzC>

Suspended SCI Pittsburgh guards to be reinstated  
Rich Lord

Eight suspended State Correctional Institution Pittsburgh corrections officers, some of whom face criminal charges, have been awarded a return to their jobs with back pay by an arbitrator in a decision dated yesterday, and released this morning.

Arbitrator Ronald F. Talarico wrote in his 24-page decision that the eight were "improperly suspended in violation of their constitutional rights to procedural due process." The Department of Corrections, the arbitrator ruled, did not tell the officers why they were being suspended, nor allow them the opportunity to defend themselves.

The eight were suspended in the run-up to criminal charges of inmate abuse on the prison's F Block. Some inmates have said that sex crimes convicts were abused there, and one of the corrections officers has been accused of sexually violating inmates.

Mr. Talarico wrote that his decision was based on "procedural irregularities" and has "nothing whatsoever to do with whether the Grievants committed any of the alleged horrendous and despicable acts of which they stand 'accused.'"

The Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association hailed the decision.

"From day one, the PSCOA has maintained that anyone found guilty of these alleged crimes should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," the union said in a statement. "However, that does not give the state the right to violate the constitutional rights to due process of these officers.

"For nearly a year, eight officers have been suspended without pay or benefits. Of those, two have never been charged and charges against two others have been dismissed. The PSCOA was proud to fight for the rights all Americans enjoy, and we're happy to help the families of these officers during such difficult economic times."

Department of Corrections spokeswoman Susan McNaughton wrote in an email response to questions: "We are reviewing the decision to determine how to implement it."

Ordered back to work is Harry F. Nicoletti, who faces 89 criminal counts, ranging from terroristic threats to institutional sexual assault. He was suspended, without pay or benefits beginning Jan. 5, 2011.

Also still facing charges ranging from oppression to simple assault, but ordered back to work with back pay, are corrections officers Tory Kelly, Jerome Lynch and Sean Storey. Cleared of charges and subject to the arbitrators award are Kevin Friess and Brian Olinger. Suspended but never charged, and now ordered back to work, are Kevin Johnson and John Michaels. Those seven have been suspended without pay since April 1.

The department, Mr. Talarico wrote, "admits that all eight Grievants have been suspended without being provided one scintilla of information as to why that action was being taken, nor without the briefest of opportunities to offer information to challenge that action."

The department explained that it could not provide them with information because F Block was the subject of a secret grand jury investigation, but Mr. Talarico didn't accept that argument. "To adopt the Commonwealth's argument would allow it to leave bargaining unit members in a suspension status without pay and benefits for months, if not years, without any semblance of a pre-deprivation hearing whatsoever

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Pittsburgh Tribune-Review (03/02/2012)

[http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/pittsburgh/s\\_784446.html](http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/pittsburgh/s_784446.html)

Decision to reinstate SCI-Pittsburgh prison guards draws fire  
By Bill Vidonic

A human rights activist criticized an arbitrator's decision on Thursday to reinstate eight SCI Pittsburgh corrections officers suspended in an abuse probe, including one awaiting trial on 89 criminal counts.

"It's a danger to public safety to have people being overseen by those (guards) that the Department of Corrections itself thinks are prone to abuse and brutalizing prisoners," said Bret Grote, a member of the Pittsburgh chapter of the Human Rights Coalition, which has been monitoring abuse complaints at the Woods Run facility.

The Department of Corrections yesterday wouldn't say if the decision through binding arbitration meant that the eight guards, suspended last year without pay, would return to work immediately. Five guards face criminal charges.

Mike Manko, spokesman for Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala Jr., said the office would not comment because of the ongoing criminal cases.

Charges have been dropped against two guards, and five others await trial. Two suspended guards were never charged criminally, while one charged criminally wasn't part of the grievance process.

Arbitrator Ronald F. Talarico of Pittsburgh wrote that his decision did not reflect on the guilt or innocence of the guards, but that the state didn't follow proper procedures in suspending them. He ordered them reinstated with full back pay and benefits; the guards had been on unemployment.

Talarico left the door open for further disciplinary action, writing "an internal departmental disciplinary hearing, a contractual arbitration hearing or by a court of law, has yet to occur."

The state Department of Corrections began an investigation into abuse allegations at the state prison in late 2010, as inmates said they were being targeted for abuse -- some sexually -- because they had been convicted of sex crimes.

Harry Nicoletti, 60, of Coraopolis, is awaiting trial on 89 offenses, including sexual assault. Other guards were charged with either participating in the abuse or failing to stop it.

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York Dispatch (03-01-2012)

[http://www.yorkdispatch.com/localnews/ci\\_20078685](http://www.yorkdispatch.com/localnews/ci_20078685)

Inmate, co-defendant face prison time on IRS charges  
GREG GROSS

A former York County resident currently serving time in a state prison and his accomplice face prison time for defrauding the federal Internal Revenue Service.

Inmate Andre Lamar Henderson, 38, and co-defendant Theresa Toby, 44, of York were sentenced Friday in connection with filing fraudulent tax return claims to the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Attorney's Office said on Wednesday.

Henderson, who's currently at the State Correctional Institute Camp Hill, was sentenced to 57 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release. He was also ordered to pay \$10,183.30 in restitution.

Henderson was convicted of conspiring to submit false claims for income tax refunds to the IRS.

Toby was sentenced to two years in prison and ordered to pay \$8,629.30 in restitution. She pleaded guilty to conspiracy to submit false claims for income tax refunds to the IRS, according to the U.S. attorney's office.

False claims: The pair filed about 43 false tax-return claims between December 2007 and August 2008.

At the time the claims were submitted, Henderson was an inmate at the state prison in Frackville, Schuylkill County.

Henderson prepared fraudulent claims for tax refunds, and Toby assisted by mailing the false claims and opening bank accounts in which the refunds were deposited, the attorney's office said.

The case was investigated by the IRS's criminal investigation unit.

Henderson has a lengthy criminal record of committing felony robberies against victims in York and other counties.

Since 2002, Henderson has pleaded guilty in nine separate robbery cases -- five in York County, one each in Dauphin and Lancaster counties, and two in Montgomery County, according to online court records.

He's also pleaded guilty in York County to theft by deception, retail theft and possession with intent to deliver a non-controlled substance, records state.

Toby's York County criminal record includes guilty pleas to six retail thefts; two false identifications to police; and one guilty plea each to robbery, resisting arrest and simple assault, records state.

NOTE: Henderson is at SCI Camp Hill.

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Carlisle Sentinel (03-02-2012)

[http://cumberlink.com/news/state-and-regional/police-wanted-pa-man-arrested-after-lobster-theft/article\\_c643573e-645f-11e1-adf9-0019bb2963f4.html#ixzz1nyHDjzur](http://cumberlink.com/news/state-and-regional/police-wanted-pa-man-arrested-after-lobster-theft/article_c643573e-645f-11e1-adf9-0019bb2963f4.html#ixzz1nyHDjzur)

Police: Wanted Pa. man arrested after lobster theft  
The Associated Press

ALLENTOWN, Pa. (AP) — A wanted Pennsylvania man got himself pinched after police say he stole lobsters from a supermarket then stole a car.

Allentown police say 46-year-old Charles Shumanis dragged his 79-year-old carjacking victim about 50 feet when he swiped the man's car Thursday afternoon.

Investigators say Shumanis dropped the lobsters in the parking lot while being chased by the store's manager then pushed a man out of his car and took off. Police say Shumanis soon crashed and was taken into custody.

Shumanis is being held on \$100,000 bail on charges including robbery and aggravated assault. Authorities say he was wanted for walking away from a work-release program.

Police say the store security guard recognized Shumanis as having previously stolen lobsters.

Officials say the carjacking victim was treated for minor injuries.  
NOTE: Shumanis was at SCI Camp Hill.

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Delaware County Times (03-02-2012)

<http://www.delcotimes.com/articles/2012/03/02/news/doc4f4f91fd475b2672773744.prt>

Man suspected of burglaries in Newtown, surrounding towns arrested  
CINDY SCHARR

A man dubbed the “bus stop burglar” was apprehended Wednesday and is now confessing to a number of residential break-ins in Delaware and Chester Counties, police said.

“Not only did we clear up our six burglaries and recover a firearm, but we are probably going to recover some of the stolen property,” said Detective John Newell of the Newtown Township Police Department. “We also have reason to believe he is involved in numerous burglaries in Chester County involving stolen firearms.”

Larry Samuel, 32, of Darby Borough, reportedly is cooperating with authorities. On Thursday morning he took police back to a wooded area where he stashed a stolen handgun he had in his possession following Wednesday’s attempted burglary, according to the affidavit of probable cause written by Newell.

Police believe Samuel is responsible for a rash of burglaries in the area over the past two to three weeks. He was arrested Wednesday after attempting to burglarize a home in the 4400 block of Florida Avenue in the Florida Park section of Newtown, according to the affidavit.

Police responding to a 911 call around 3 p.m. were told that a black male wearing all black and carrying a black backpack had knocked on the door of a home, then went around back and tried to get in through the back door. The homeowner was there and confronted the suspect, who said he was looking for “Austin,” the affidavit states.

The suspect fled, but the victim and a friend gave chase while calling 911. The two men lost sight of the suspect near Tuxedo Avenue.

Responding officers from Newtown, Marple, Upper Providence, Media, Easttown and Willistown Townships fanned out across the area searching for the suspect.

“We probably had 20 police cars there,” Newell said. “We wanted to get this guy because we knew he was doing a ton of burglaries. We check every neighborhood, every shed, every garage.”

After about two hours, one of the original witnesses, who was riding an all-terrain vehicle in a field near Fox Trail Farms, reportedly spotted Samuel in a wooded area on the north side of West Chester Pike and alerted police.

When officers approached him, Samuel took off running. Newtown's K-9 officer Falco and his handler Officer Jeff Johnson eventually apprehended him without further incident.

The victim and his neighbor were brought to the area and positively identified Samuel as the man who allegedly had tried to break into the home in the township's Florida Park section, according to the affidavit.

He reportedly had a silver Seiko watch, Ipod Nano with a charger, a Metro PCS cellphone and \$555 in cash on him when he was arrested, police said.

Samuel allegedly initially gave police a fake name several times, but he was positively identified using fingerprints.

Newell took a statement from Samuel, who admitted to four burglaries in Newtown and two in Marple, the affidavit states.

He allegedly told investigators that he took SEPTA buses to get in and out of the area during his burglaries. He said he committed the crimes because he needed money for his family, but added it was "a big mistake," the affidavit states.

Samuel reportedly admitted to burglarizing a home in the 2800 block of Gradyville Road in Marple on Feb. 14, police said. He allegedly got inside the home by breaking the glass out of the back door, then allegedly stole a laptop, jewelry and loose change, the affidavit states.

Samuel allegedly admitted to breaking into another home in the same area that day and stealing a video camera, Nook book reader and two laptops.

Samuel also reportedly admitted to breaking into two homes in the 400 block of South Newtown Street Road on Feb. 23 where he allegedly stole an Apple laptop, an HP laptop, which he pawned for \$250, a Kindle reader and some loose change, according to the affidavit.

He reportedly entered one house by smashing a small window, and at the other residence, unlocked a door reaching through an unlocked window, Samuel reportedly told police.

Samuel allegedly confessed to breaking in to two homes on Main Street in Newtown on Feb. 24 and stealing jewelry, a laptop and a 38-caliber revolver. Again, he told police he broke out a small window at one home, and he got inside the other residence through an unlocked side window, the affidavit states.

During interviews with police, Samuel allegedly confessed to his involvement in a number of burglaries that involved stolen guns in Chester County.

Those incidents remain under investigation by Chester County authorities.

Thursday afternoon, police were able to recover some of the stolen merchandise from a local pawn shop.

Newell credited township residents, including the two men involved in Wednesday's incident, with assisting police in making the arrest.

The detective noted that the victim's immediate call to 911 provided police with information that was critical in stopping an armed suspect from continuing his crime spree.

Samuel has numerous prior criminal convictions dating back to 1999. He has served jail time for a variety of crimes including drug offenses, aggravated assault, false identification to law enforcement, possession of instruments of crime, criminal trespass and escape. At the time of his arrest he was out on bail on charges filed by Philadelphia Police for assault and reckless endangerment.

A resident of the 700 block of Main Street in Darby Borough, Samuel can now add six counts each of burglary, criminal trespass and possessing instruments of crime, 10 counts of theft by unlawful taking and receiving stolen property and one count of unsworn falsifications to authorities to his arrest record. He is being held in Delaware County prison on 10 percent of \$100,000 bail.

NOTE: Samuel was at SCI Cresson.

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Washington Observer Reporter (03-02-2012)

<http://www.observer-reporter.com/or/break11/home-invasion-arrest-03022012>

Arrest made in home invasion

South Strabane Township police have arrested a man in connection with Saturday's home invasion on Booth Road.

James E. Clark, 48, last known address was North Franklin Township, was taken into custody without incident early Friday after members of the Washington County SWAT unit and township police surrounded a home on Elmwood Drive in the township, where he apparently was staying.

Clark will be arraigned on charges of burglary, robbery, conspiracy and terroristic threats.

NOTE: Clark was at SCI Greene.

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Wilkes Barre Citizens Voice (03-02-2012)

: <http://citizensvoice.com/news/brothers-given-life-sentences-for-hazleton-man-s-death-1.1280006#ixzz1nydY9aSe>

Brothers given life sentences for Hazleton man's death  
Kent Jackson

WILKES-BARRE - Two brothers convicted of killing a Hazleton man in 2010 during a drug deal in West Hazleton will spend the rest of their lives in prison.

Izel and Isiah Garrett, both of whom claimed innocence during their trial, were sentenced for killing Abdul Hakeem Shabazz, a 30-year-old father of three who was shot while offering to sell the brothers about \$400 worth of marijuana on Dec. 6, 2010.

Shabazz's mother, Shelia Shabazz, could barely speak through her sobs when she addressed the judge Thursday. She did say she was sorry for the Garretts' mother, who also was in the courtroom.

"There are no words I can say to you, ma'am, other than I'm sorry for your loss," Judge Tina Polachek Gartley said.

When sentencing the Garretts, who are from Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County, Gartley stressed their ages.

"I don't think you understand," Gartley said before telling Isiah Garrett, 22, that the law mandates a life sentence for second-degree murder, the most serious charge on which the brothers were convicted.

The Garretts also were found guilty of robbery that caused serious bodily injury, possession of a weapon on which the serial number had been filed off and two counts of conspiracy.

Isiah Garrett told the judge that "my life really doesn't matter," but said: "I did not commit these crimes."

Izel Garrett, 20, also said he "didn't do it" when standing before Gartley.

The brothers blamed the killing on their cousin, Tyrek Smith, who was inside the residence at 216 W. Third St. when Shabazz was shot.

Prosecutors declined to charge Smith with murder, and he testified during the Garretts' trial that Izel Garrett fired two shots that hit Shabazz, who died the next day.

Smith is scheduled to be sentenced today on a charge related to the robbery of Shabazz.

Assistant District Attorney Frank McCabe termed the Garretts' actions unnecessary.

Shabazz was shot after recognizing that the Garretts offered to buy the marijuana from him with counterfeit money.

"They could have let him go. They could have let him walk out of it, but they didn't," McCabe said.

The Garrett brothers had a prior record score of zero for sentencing purposes, an indication of a clean criminal record.

Isiah Garrett, however, awaits trial in Dauphin County on charges related to the slaying of a college student a month before Shabazz's death.

In addition to sentencing the Garretts to life for second-degree murder, Gartley said they could have been sentenced to a maximum of 28 months for the weapons charge. She ordered them to pay restitution and costs of prosecution totaling \$13,445.

Gartley also imposed a second life sentence on each of the brothers for the charge of conspiracy to commit murder. Punishment, the judge said, won't comfort the victim's mother, the Garrett family or the mothers of Shabazz's children.

"It doesn't bring back their son, It doesn't help your family or bring back a father," Gartley said

Shabazz's 2-year-old son, Jahmony Shabazz, was in the courtroom with his mother, Shanel Boyd of Hazleton. Shabazz also leaves a 9-year-old child and a 1-year-old son, Malik Abdul Shabazz, who was born on Jan. 8, 2011 on what would have been his father's 31st birthday, his mother, Shannon Shafer of Hazleton, said after the sentencing.

While the Garretts initially will be sent to the state prison in Camp Hill for classification, they will be kept apart there. Sue Bensinger, a spokeswoman for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, said it is highly unlikely the Garretts will be incarcerated together.

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Press Release (03-01-2012)

<http://wallaby.telicon.com/PA/library/2012/2012030142.HTM>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Rep. Ronald G. Waters

D-Philadelphia/Delaware

[www.pahouse.com/Waters](http://www.pahouse.com/Waters)

Waters named Democratic chairman of Crime and Corrections Subcommittee

HARRISBURG, March 1 – State Rep. Ronald G. Waters, D-Phila./Delaware, has been appointed to serve as the Democratic chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime and Corrections within the House Appropriations Committee.

The traditional role of the House Appropriations Committee includes developing the annual General Fund budget, as well as examining the governor's budget proposal and how it will affect people in Philadelphia and across Pennsylvania.

"It is a huge honor to serve as a subcommittee chairman in Appropriations," Waters said. "My role will require me to examine the budget and policies as they relate to the Department of Corrections and programs.

As the chairman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, Waters' new appointment will add to his duties and legislative assignments, but he said he believes serving as subcommittee chairman will allow him to better help the people of Philadelphia, Delaware County and the rest of the Commonwealth, especially those re-released into law-abiding society.

Waters said he wants to focus on what proposals the Department of Corrections may have that will achieve rehabilitation, as well as what kind of funding prison inmates and juveniles can benefit from and which are cost effective.

"There have been recent accounts of the mistreatment of inmates, particularly young people of color, in Pennsylvania's correctional institutions," said Waters.

"I will be using my subcommittee chairmanship to ensure that we carefully budget and fund more programs to improve the current conditions of our correctional facilities, our after-prison programs to reduce recidivism and programs for at-risk youth. There will be no future if we do not support people who are the future, regardless of their past.

"Let's prepare our young people for Yale and not jail."

The House budget hearings for the 2012-13 state budget began last week and will continue through March. More information about the 2012-13 state budget process is available on [www.hacd.net](http://www.hacd.net).

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Erie Times News (03/02/2012)

<http://www.goerie.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2012303029996>

Our view: Quick action in prison case restores trust

When two prison guards allegedly took the law into their own hands, the law came back with criminal charges against them and five prisoners.

Most of us will never be caught up in the criminal justice system, other than perhaps to serve on a jury, but we all have a stake in preserving the integrity of the system.

We start with the presumption of innocence. Then there are proper procedures to determine guilt and its degree, and meting out punishment. If that punishment includes a prison term, there is also an expectation that inmates will be rehabilitated so they can return to society after they've been punished. Such punishment should not involve prisoners beating up inmates, with the tacit approval of the guards.

Yet that's what District Attorney Jack Daneri says happened at the Erie County Prison on Jan. 29. On that day, according to the DA's office, five prisoners -- Nicholas Cornman, 26, Dennis R. Nelson, 26, Dennis Howard Doggett, 34, Eli B. Malinowski, 25, and John Maas, 46 -- beat Thor Perry, 20, in his prison cell. Those five inmates have been charged with simple assault and criminal conspiracy.

Prison guard Jason Worcester, 36, has been charged with arranging for the inmates to beat Thor, who was charged with punching and choking Worcester's niece on Dec. 30. Guard Clifford Palmer, 42, has been charged with criminal conspiracy and with not doing enough to stop the attack. Both guards have been suspended without pay pending a separate investigation to see if they should be fired.

Evidence against the guards and the inmates includes surveillance video of Worcester meeting with two of the inmates who have been charged, as well as various conversations (one by telephone and another overheard) in which inmates describe and even boast about the beating.

Physical assault is a disturbing crime, but Thor has not yet been tried on that charge. Whether someone is jailed while awaiting trial or imprisoned after conviction, there is no excuse for such violence to take place in an institution dedicated to law and order.

Penal codes -- the things that distinguish the American justice system from totalitarian regimes -- apply to everyone in a position of authority, no matter where they fall in the chain of command.

"Crimes like this, which involve those entrusted with protecting others, are most disturbing," Daneri says. We agree.

Erie County Executive Barry Grossman praised Prison Warden James Veshecco for alerting both Grossman and the DA's office to the attack as soon as Veshecco learned about it.

The investigation, internally and by the prosecutor, shows that those in authority took the charges seriously. Their quick action helps to restore trust in a system that will, we trust, also treat the seven men charged with fairness and justice.

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Erie Times-News (03/01/2012)

<http://www.goerie.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2012303019875>

Erie County officials suspend prison guard accused in tavern assault  
By KEVIN FLOWERS

An Erie County Prison guard charged with assaulting a bartender and threatening her with a stun gun after stealing a drink from a westside tavern in February has been indefinitely suspended from his job.

County Executive Barry Grossman has confirmed that Mark Schumacher, 58, has been suspended without pay pending a county review of the incident, which happened at a tavern in the 1500 block of West 26th Street on Feb. 11.

Grossman said Schumacher was suspended shortly after Erie police filed charges against him on Feb. 22.

Schumacher, of the 1700 block of West 27th Street, is accused of hitting a female bartender in the chest with his elbow and knocking her to the ground after he was thrown out of the tavern for refusing to pay for a drink and for calling the woman an obscene name, according to the criminal complaint filed in the case.

Schumacher has been a county employee since 1983, according to county records. He faces misdemeanor counts of simple assault, theft by unlawful taking and disorderly conduct, and is scheduled to appear in court for a preliminary hearing on March 29.

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Easton Express-Time (03/01/2012)

[http://www.lehighvalleylive.com/warren-county/express-times/index.ssf/2012/03/warren\\_county\\_judge\\_says\\_pike.html](http://www.lehighvalleylive.com/warren-county/express-times/index.ssf/2012/03/warren_county_judge_says_pike.html)

Warren County judge gives serial house burglar drug court sentence

A Pike County man who broke into several Warren County homes, even while at least one resident was home, demonstrated "acts of an addict's desperation," according to a New Jersey Superior Court judge.

Shawn H. Culleny, 31, of Milford, Pa., did not show the kind of dangerous behavior that could disqualify him from enrollment in the county's drug court program, Judge Ann R. Bartlett ruled.

Because of the ruling, Culleny, who pleaded guilty to 18 counts of theft and burglary in a rash of residential burglaries in Hope and White townships, will be eligible for the county's intensive probationary program.

The Warren County Prosecutor's Office opposed drug court for Culleny, calling his behavior too violent. An alternative to prison, drug court is reserved for nonviolent offenders faced with a state prison sentence if they demonstrate a substance-abuse addiction.

Bartlett disagreed with the prosecution, saying Culleny's reactions during the burglaries weren't indicative of a proclivity for violence.

When a resident caught Culleny last May in a White Township home, he tried to explain his presence by saying he needed directions to Route 46, according to court documents.

Police later stopped Culleny on Route 519 and, after getting a warrant, searched his vehicle, discovering drug paraphernalia, a hammer, gloves and items believed to be stolen, records say.

"He made a lame excuse for his presence in the house, apologized and left. This is a nonviolent response," Bartlett said.

The judge said this reaction indicates Culleny was more a person acting in the "throes of addiction" than one who wants to harm others.

"He has not lost his respect for human safety," she said, though she added he had apparently lost respect for others' property.

She noted that Culleny did not attempt to rob or harm the homeowner when he was caught.

Warren County Assistant Prosecutor Victor Jusino indicated he would appeal the judge's decision permitting Culleny access to drug court at sentencing.

Though Bartlett was not prepared to sentence Culleny right away, she voiced disappointment with how long the case had dragged on when the 31-year-old was ready to plead guilty months ago.

Bartlett noted that communication with the Morris County Prosecutor's Office, where Culleny faces other charges, has been spotty and paperwork for the defendant appears to repeatedly get lost in the shuffle.

"It just seems this defendant is under some kind of black cloud," Bartlett said.

A status conference to determine when Culleny will be sentenced and how other out-of-county charges may be resolved is scheduled March 8 in Belvidere.

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Hazleton Standard Speaker (03/02/2012)

<http://standardspeaker.com/news/officials-fail-to-reach-deal-on-prison-layoffs-1.1280109#axzz1nyNgfH5j>

Officials fail to reach deal on prison layoffs  
By Michael P. Buffer

WILKES-BARRE - Luzerne County officials and prison union representatives could not agree to terms Thursday on a deal to halt the layoffs of 10 union employees.

The county is in the process of laying off 67 employees, and most, including the layoffs of the 10 prison union employees, take effect today.

Prison union members thought they had a tentative agreement when they voted to give up a 3-percent pay increase, but Tom Pribula, the interim manager until Wednesday, withdrew support of the deal, claiming it would tie the hands of management.

According to a deal negotiated Feb. 17, the county would not lay off any non-probationary member of the union through Dec. 31, 2013 and could lay off five new prison employees, who last week were laid off before finishing a 90-day probationary period.

The county would have halted the 10 layoffs of prison union employees if the union negotiators agreed Thursday to recommend that members approve the county's counteroffer, Director of Human Resources Andrew Check said. The counteroffer removed a provision that would force the county to retroactively pay all prison union employees this year's pay increase if an arbitrator later this year or next year ruled against the county in a grievance procedure, Check said.

Under the current collective bargaining agreement, an arbitration ruling against the county would be limited to the individual grievant and contract violation, Check said. The union represents more than 300 employees, and the offer to give this year's pay increase would reduce wages by more than \$400,000 this year.

Tom Borum, union business agent for Laborers' International Union of North America, said the penalty that would retroactively trigger this year's pay increase would be limited to a violation of the agreement on the wage freeze and layoffs. The dispute is over an interpretation of language in the proposed deal, Borum said.

"We tried to do this very quickly," Borum said. "The layoffs are going to happen."

Borum said he still hopes the 10 union employees are able to come back to work if the union and county agree to terms on a wage-freeze deal. County Manager Robert Lawton said he also remains interested in continuing to negotiate a wage-freeze agreement.

Pribula participated in Thursday's negotiation session, which lasted more than 90 minutes, officials said. Lawton said he has not offered Pribula a job but remains interested in offering him a job on his staff.

He could replace Joan Pusateri as finance chief because she is resigning March 16 to take a job with Butler Township. Former county Commissioner Maryanne Petrilla is the Butler Township manager.

County commissioners appointed Pusateri to replace Pribula as finance chief in December 2010. Pribula resigned from that job after disagreements with county commissioners over revenue projections.

When the county's home-rule government began Jan. 2, county council appointed Pribula as interim manager. Lawton took over as manager Wednesday.

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California-Centre Daily Times (03/02/2012)

<http://www.centredaily.com/2012/03/02/3110619/symbol-of-calif-prison-overcrowding.html>

Symbol of Calif. prison overcrowding comes to end  
By DON THOMPSON — Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California prisons mark a milestone Friday, when officials announce they have removed the last of nearly 20,000 extra beds that had been jammed into gymnasiums and other common areas to house inmates who overflowed traditional prison cells.

Inmates in rows of double- and triple-stacked bunk beds became "the iconic symbol of California's prison overcrowding crisis," Corrections Secretary Matthew Cate said in announcing an end to what the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation formally calls "nontraditional beds."

Crowding was so bad that it was hours before guards discovered that an inmate had been killed in his bunk in a makeshift dormitory at the California Rehabilitation Center in Riverside County in 2005, former state corrections secretary Jeanne Woodford told federal judges in 2008.

The judges have since forced California to radically change the way it punishes criminals. The prison population has dropped by nearly 19,000 inmates since a new law took effect in October that is sending less serious offenders to county jails instead of state prisons.

California currently has nearly 142,000 inmates but must shed another 17,000 inmates to reach the June 2103 court deadline to reduce crowding in its 33 adult prisons. The federal courts ordered the state to reduce its inmate population as a way to improve inmate medical care, which was so inadequate that judges ruled it violated prisoners' constitutional rights.

The nontraditional beds once held more inmates than the entire prison populations of 25 other states, according to national statistics for 2010, the most recent available.

The U.S. Supreme Court published two photographs of tattooed, shirtless inmates milling around three-tier bunk beds as part of its ruling last year upholding the authority of lower courts to order California to reduce crowding.

Cramped conditions promote unrest and violence, the justices said. The court's ruling cited a medical expert who testified that forcing large numbers of inmates to share a few toilets made the congested areas "breeding grounds for disease." The crowding was unhealthy and dangerous not only for inmates, the court said,

but for the guards, as well. The ratio in some overcrowded dormitories was often two or three guards for every 200 inmates.

The use of the nontraditional beds dates back a quarter-century but spiked when California prisons filled to bursting as get-tough sentencing laws took effect. At their peak in August 2007, the department had 72 gyms and 125 dayrooms jammed with 19,618 inmate beds.

"They provided an accurate and extremely graphic example of the crowding and inhumanity that engulfed the entire system," said Don Specter, director of the nonprofit Prison Law Office in Berkeley, which sued to force the state to ease crowding as a way to improve the treatment of sick and mentally ill inmates.

Cate, the corrections secretary, scheduled a news conference Friday to mark the occasion at Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, 70 miles south of the state capital.

The prison lost its original purpose a decade ago when it was pressed into use as a reception center for newly arriving prisoners. At one point, more than 1,000 inmates were shoehorned into makeshift areas at the prison, crowding that prison officials say helped spark a riot in 2003 that injured nine inmates and one employee.

The institution once offered 13 vocational education programs, including painting, welding, office machine repair, shoe repair and electronics, which disappeared.

Now that there is more space for classrooms, officials said the prison is expected to again offer classes in welding, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, and auto body repair.

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California- Harrisburg Patriot-News (03/01/2012)

<http://www.pennlive.com/newsflash/index.ssf/story/death-penalty-opponents-move-closer-to-november-ballot-initiative/7ea2de400e559c0c2e2f2e33523d6f25>

Death penalty opponents move closer to November ballot initiative

LOS ANGELES \_ Capital punishment opponents announced Thursday they have submitted 800,000 signatures to election authorities to put a measure on the November ballot that would ask voters to replace the death penalty with sentences of life without the possibility of parole.

Efforts to repeal the death penalty have failed repeatedly in California since capital punishment was reinstated in 1978.

But organizers of the SAFE California Act contend that polls show majority support for an initiative that would replace death sentences with an ironclad guarantee that the worst criminals stay in prison for the rest of their lives.

Supporters of the initiative say it will save the state hundreds of millions that would be better spent on schools and public safety.

"Those of us in law enforcement know that the best way to prevent crime is to solve it. Replacing the death penalty with a punishment of life in prison without parole will free up funds for critical tools like DNA testing in the shocking 46 percent of murder and 56 percent of reported rape cases that remain unsolved in our state every year," said Jeanne Woodford, a former warden at San Quentin State Prison who oversaw four executions during her tenure.

She is now campaigning for the initiative to replace death with life sentences. The signatures submitted to county election officials in each of the 58 counties must be verified, but campaign sponsors said they were confident they would easily surpass the 504,000 valid endorsements needed to get the issue on the ballot in November.

Initiative backers contend replacing death with mandatory life in prison will expedite justice for crime victims and cease squandering unnecessary sums on death row's 725 condemned inmates and the multiple appeals they are allowed when their lives are at stake.

"Our focus in times of fiscal crisis should be crystal clear. The death penalty wastes \$184 million a year over life without parole," said Gil Garcetti, a former Los Angeles County district attorney whose support for the death penalty has been eroded by the soaring costs of maintaining a punishment seldom meted out.

But those who support capital punishment say the opponents' cost-savings figures are inflated. The number of new death sentences fell dramatically last year and for the last decade have been well below the rate of the 1990s, said Kent Scheidegger, legal director of the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation.

"The other side of the coin is the cost of keeping all of these prisoners to the end of their lives, if the promise of true life-without-parole is to be kept," he said. "Medical costs are a large and growing part of the corrections budget, and those costs escalate dramatically with age."

A three-year study of capital punishment in California released last year estimated that maintaining a death penalty has cost taxpayers \$4 billion since 1978, while only 13 executions were carried out.

With litigation keeping the death penalty on hold for the last six years and likely for at least two years longer, the report by a federal judge and a law professor projected that taxpayers will likely spend another \$1 billion every five years to keep a punishment that is largely illusory.

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Illinois-Chicago Tribune (03-02-2012)

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/sns-bc-il--illinoisbudget-prisonsglance.0,2774865.story>

Illinois prison officials give varying explanations for parole reorganization  
Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn's budget plan calls for decreasing spending on parolee monitoring, and budget documents indicate fewer jobs. Department of Corrections officials say it's a "reorganization" to focus on more dangerous parolees and to rely on electronic monitoring and other technology to keep track of less risky ex-convicts.

Based on budget numbers, The Associated Press calculated that 148 parole-office jobs would be eliminated. When asked about its plans, the department gave varying answers:

—Feb. 27: "It is not a reduction in parole headcount. It is not the governor's intention to reduce parole staff."

—Feb. 27: "As part of the parole reorganization, there is likely to be some reduction — not in parole services — but in field services personnel, as DOC brings some of the current field personnel back to do parole functions within the institutions."

—Feb. 28: "It is not the governor's intention to reduce parole services."

—Feb. 29: "While the figures in the budget book may be confusing in regard to the parole monitoring headcount, the department is not reducing parole functions."

—Feb. 29: "The numbers in your analysis do not take into consideration attrition."

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Louisiana The Daily Isureveille (03-01-2012)

<http://www.lsureveille.com/news/school-of-social-work-conducts-dropout-study-1.2709820>

School of Social Work conducts dropout study  
Nearly 20 percent become convicts  
Shannon Roberts

About 15,000 students drop out of Louisiana public schools each year, and of that number, about 18 percent enter the Department of Corrections, according to a study by the University's School of Social Work.

The study found the annual weighted cost, on average, for each person being punished within the Department of Corrections was \$4,750.

The dropout study is headed by Cecile Guin, director of the Office of Social Service Research and Development, and has been ongoing for more than a year. It aims to make citizens aware of how much money dropouts cost the state and how important it is for students to remain in school and graduate, Guin said.

The dropout study collected data from the Department of Corrections, the Department of Education and the Office of Juvenile Justice from 1996 and later, Guin said. If the number of students dropping out was lowered by 10 percent, the state would save more than \$7 million a year from the Department of Corrections, the study found. With that reduction of dropouts, the estimated tax benefits for one year are estimated to be more than \$3 million.

"We're planning on looking at more family variables with children who have dropped out," Guin said. "We will work with the workforce commission to see what types of employment [dropouts] have."

Social work professor Pamela Monroe is working on Entergy's Adopt a School Zone program, which is in its first year with the University. The program is conducted at Istrouma High School in Baton Rouge, but it may expand to include other high schools in the coming year, Monroe said.

"The purpose is to combat poverty by improving retention and graduation rates in high schools," Monroe said. "We know that there's such a strong relationship between academic success and exits from poverty."

The program currently gives free tax preparation and tips to avoid predatory lending to the families of students, Monroe said.

"That's clearly not something that is of deep concern to high school students. That's a deep concern to their families and parents," Monroe said.

The study is important because the researchers say many societal issues are closely related.

"They're circular problems: poverty, not staying in school, living in unstable neighborhoods, crime. It's all the same problem," Guin said.

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Michigan-The Washington Post (03-01-2012)

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/judge-wont-intervene-in-prisons-refusal-to-release-dying-mich-man-who-aided-hussein-regime/2012/03/01/gIQA9FmTIR\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/judge-wont-intervene-in-prisons-refusal-to-release-dying-mich-man-who-aided-hussein-regime/2012/03/01/gIQA9FmTIR_story.html)

Judge won't intervene in prison's refusal to release dying Mich. man who aided Hussein regime  
Associated Press

Hussein has failed to persuade a judge to help him go home to die.

Detroit federal Judge Nancy Edmunds said Thursday she has no authority to intervene in a matter that's up to prison officials. Doctors say Najib Shemami has cancer and less than four months to live.

Officials at a federal prison in Butner, N.C., say Shemami might commit more crimes if released. The warden has declined to approve his release.

The 62-year-old Shemami has served about a year of a 46-month sentence for passing sensitive information to Iraq. He informed about military movements in Turkey before the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that overthrew Saddam.

Shemami's relatives say he'd live with them in Oakland Township if released.

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Michigan-The Daily Reporter (03-01-2012)

<http://www.thedailyreporter.com/newsnow/x1055695250/Board-joins-resolution-on-DOC-releases>

Board joins resolution on DOC releases  
Roland Stoy

Coldwater, Mich. — The Branch County Board on Tuesday approved a resolution regarding “early release of violent offenders” by the state Department of Corrections (DOC).

On a unanimous roll call vote, commissioners approved a resolution received from Oakland County opposing the early release of “violent” offenders, to be forwarded to Gov. Rick Snyder and the DOC.

The resolution reads, “Whereas, recent events of violence against Michigan residents by parolees of the Michigan Department of Corrections have alarmed citizens and public officials; and ... Prosecutors statewide have gone to court to protest the pending parole of inmates considered to be dangerous; Now therefore be it resolved that the Branch County Board of Commissioners urges the Michigan Department of Corrections to review criteria used to determine eligibility for parole of violent and repeat offenders.”

While the resolution voices opposition to “the practice of releasing violent and repeat offender inmates ‘near’ the minimum end of their sentence,” DOC spokesman Russ Marlan said Tuesday when one is sentenced, for example, to three to five years, they will serve at least the three years.

What has eased, he said, is the return of parole violators to the DOC system, such as in the case of seven parolees held in the Branch County jail last week. Three remained on Monday, according to Sheriff Warren Canon.

As for dwindling prison populations, Marlan said felonies are down, and the recidivism rate, the percentage of repeat offenders, has gone from 45.7 to 33.2 percent.

He credited prisoner re-entry programs for some success, but said it is often hard for a convicted felon to get a job, and agreed with Canon, that in a poor economy, when one cannot find a job, they often will do whatever they feel necessary to survive.

This unfortunately sometimes includes resorting to crime.

In other matters

- Regarding \$7,000 taken out of the Victim Advocate budget in the prosecutor's office, to help with pension true-up funding, County Administrator Bud Norman said the situation is being reviewed. The Victim Advocate is a funded mandate, and Prosecutor Terri Norris said if state funding is lost due to the misappropriation, the county might have to stand good for the entire \$53,000 for the office.
- The board approved an agreement with the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph District Health Agency in which any work necessary at the Lakeland prison could be billed back to the county up to \$7,128. Commissioners had agreed the prison should not be included in the contribution to the agency, and the accord came as a result of agency board action. Commissioners Jon Houtz and Chair Dale Swift voted against the agreement.
- The new \$258,000 parking lot at the courthouse has been cracking and scaling, and Norman said analysis has suggested "cyclic freeze thaw action" and the lack of proper curing might be the reason. Norman said he will seek further clarification of the testing by American Engineering.

#### Prison closings

Marlan, questioned on prison closings following the loss of Camp Branch and Florence Crane in Branch County, said the Mounds facility in the Detroit area was shut down last month. He spoke of no plans regarding the remaining prison here, Lakeland.

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Michigan-WLNS (03-01-2012)

<http://www.wlns.com/story/17060375/michigan-department-of-corrections-faces-changes>

Michigan Department Of Corrections Faces Changes  
Abby Grimmatt

Lansing, Mich. -- (WLNS) The Michigan Department of Corrections is going through some more changes.

In order to cut spending, it's eliminating some positions. While the move doesn't mean the workers will lose their jobs, the union still has concerns about safety.

Right now about 2,500 people work for the Department of Corrections as resident unit officers.

"You have the same personnel, the same corrections officers working in the housing units everyday. And that's very important because they enforce the rules, they know the prisoners, they know when the prisoners are having a bad day," said Tom Tylutki, MI Corrections Organization president.

Come April 1, they'll become corrections officers. They will each take a \$1.40 an hour pay cut, but money isn't what concerns the Michigan Corrections Organization.

"We think it's a dangerous move. And we believe that trouble is going to happen," said Tylutki.

Officials at the corrections department say there shouldn't be a change in service though, since it's not getting rid of positions inside the prisons and plans are in the works to keep the same staff in their current housing units.

"We can't say that we'll honor every single one of the 2,500, but we're going to do our very best, because it's in our benefit too, to ensure that people who are familiar with those units, who are familiar with those prisoners in those housing units, continue to stay in there and monitor the security," said Russ Marlan, MI Department of Corrections spokesperson.

At a time of continuing budget deficits the department says it makes sense to go with a plan that will save it \$12 million a year.

The classification is a prohibited bargaining subject so the corrections union wasn't able to talk about it during negotiations. But, members are in the process of filing an appeal with the civil service commission.

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Mississippi-NECN (03-01-2012)

[http://www.necn.com/03/01/12/Miss-Department-of-Health-asks-25M-AIDS-landing\\_health.html?&apID=2cf6ae0319e2427fb353bf6f935c29d1](http://www.necn.com/03/01/12/Miss-Department-of-Health-asks-25M-AIDS-landing_health.html?&apID=2cf6ae0319e2427fb353bf6f935c29d1)

Miss. Department of Health asks \$2.5M AIDS funds

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Representatives of the Mississippi Health Department said Thursday that they are requesting \$2.5 million from the state Legislature to match a federal grant to treat people with HIV and AIDS.

But a prominent lawmaker said there was little chance the funding would be granted because money is tight.

The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program provides funding for services related to HIV and AIDS, such as paying for medications, providing health insurance and transportation to doctors' appointments.

The program helps more than half a million people nationwide each year. It will match \$2 for every \$1 spent on HIV and AIDS by the state Health Department.

Rep. Steve Holland, D-Plantersville is a longtime supporter of those with HIV and AIDS, but said Thursday that the chances for funding are "slim to none." Holland is a former chairman of the House Public Health Committee.

"We eradicated polio, we have fought every disease that has come to our state," Holland told dozens of people at a news conference to support the Health Department's funding request. But as for HIV and AIDS, he said: "We have to step up our efforts in this fight."

Those on hand included members of Mississippi's gay community, and representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Some held signs left over from a cancelled gay rights march that was to have taken place earlier in the day, declaring that they are "Gay by birth, Fabulous by choice," and that "Love is Love." Others held signs saying "End AIDS in MS."

The Mississippi Health Department has already raised \$4 million toward a total of \$6.5 million they would need to receive the full \$13.5 million from the Ryan White program. Some of the \$4 million comes from funding already committed to HIV and AIDS work in the state, such as in the Department of Corrections, according to Health Department spokeswoman Liz Sharlot.

Mississippi Health Officer Dr. Mary Currier said the department receives its funding as a lump sum, and that it is currently requesting \$32.5 million, of which the Ryan White Program funds are a portion. If the department does not receive

the full amount, she said, funding would not necessarily be cut from HIV and AIDS money, but a combination of programs.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Herb Frierson, R-Poplarville, said he is optimistic that the Health Department will receive about the same amount of funding as last year, about \$26.5 million — but probably not more.

Public Health and Welfare Committee Chairman Sam Mims, R-McComb, said he is trying hard to ensure the health department will receive the funding it needs.

"Overall our state budget is going to be very tight," Mims said. "We can only spend what the taxpayers send us."

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New Jersey-Philadelphia Inquirer (03-02-2012)

[http://www.philly.com/philly/news/new\\_jersey/20120302\\_Christie\\_proposal\\_would\\_mandate\\_drug\\_treatment\\_for\\_nonviolent\\_offenders.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/news/new_jersey/20120302_Christie_proposal_would_mandate_drug_treatment_for_nonviolent_offenders.html)

Christie proposal would mandate drug treatment for nonviolent offenders  
Joelle Farrell

Calling addiction a treatable disease, Gov. Christie said Thursday that he would require treatment for nonviolent criminals with drug dependence, a program that would take at least a year to start.

In the meantime, Christie would offer yearlong drug treatment to 1,000 to 1,500 low-level offenders now in prison.

"I believe that this will be, if we do it the right way, one of the lasting legacies of this administration," Christie said at a news conference at the Rescue Mission of Trenton. "Budgets come and go. Taxes go up and down. But saving lives . . . that lasts forever."

Lawmakers in both chambers have introduced bills that would alter the state's drug court program, making treatment mandatory for any qualifying offender determined to have a problem with substance abuse. Drug court, which began as a pilot in Camden and Essex Counties in 1996, has allowed some offenders to avoid jail if they volunteer for treatment.

Christie budgeted \$2.5 million in fiscal 2013 for his initiative, but it would cost more to fully implement. If treatment for the current inmates costs more than he expected, he will ask the Legislature for more money, he said.

In the long term, as many as 7,000 people arrested annually could qualify for the program. Because it costs as much as \$49,000 a year to incarcerate an inmate, Christie said, the state would save money by moving nonviolent offenders out of prison and into rehabilitation.

Treatment officials said Christie's \$2.5 million investment is small; they estimate it is enough to add 50 beds, which could treat 200 to 800 people, depending on the severity of their addiction.

But Christie's statement is big, they said.

"We've waited for a governor to seize that bully pulpit and bring the focus to this issue that it deserves," said John Hulick, who has been in the drug-treatment field for 20 years and was executive director to the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Addiction. "For him to take the stance and so eloquently call it what it is, which is a chronic illness . . . it will bring hope to thousands of families who live in the shame of the stigma of drug addiction."

Christie, a Republican and former federal prosecutor, acknowledged that his proposal would not help thousands in New Jersey who want drug treatment but have not committed a crime.

More than 30,000 adults who sought drug treatment in 2010 were turned away, according to figures from the state's Division of Addiction Services. Treatment providers estimate that the unmet demand is even higher.

Many of the state's 193 licensed drug-treatment providers have waiting lists or are not equipped to handle intensive rehabilitation needs, said Roseanne Scotti, director of the New Jersey chapter of the Drug Policy Alliance.

Health insurance plans may cover only a portion of treatment or none at all, she said. Funds for the poor, uninsured, or underinsured are scarce.

"You're lucky if you get 30 days in treatment," she said. "Do you have to get arrested to get drug treatment in New Jersey?"

Even funds dedicated to treating those who have been arrested for driving while intoxicated often dry up before the end of the year, said Manuel Guantez, executive director of Turning Points, which has rehabilitation centers in North Jersey.

Christie said he hoped his proposal would "create a culture" or a "movement" that would lead to more treatment centers in the state.

"I can only fix the things that I can fix," he said. "We're going to bid out these beds at the state level, the state's going to be paying for it, and yes, the state's going to get priority on those beds, no question."

Nearly 4,200 people participate in the current drug court program, which allows low-level offenders to avoid prison by undergoing drug treatment, according to state statistics from last month. Drug court is available in all 21 counties.

About half of the people who qualify for drug court treatment turn it down, said Sen. Ray Lesniak (D., Union), sponsor of a bill that would expand the program's eligibility. He worries that those who are forced into treatment could spoil the therapy for others.

"The group dynamic in any recovery program is critical to recovery," he said this week.

Some opiate addicts turn down drug court because the program does not allow methadone, a drug that can help heroin addicts manage withdrawal, Scotti said.

Christie, who spent five years as a board member of a Mendham drug-rehabilitation facility, said treatment experts can decide whether methadone is appropriate in the expanded drug court program.

As for the usefulness of forced treatment, Christie said, "if we mandate people to jail, we can mandate people to treatment."

"Any of us who have experienced this in our own families, which I have, the person never admits it," he said. "The fact that they say they don't have a problem when there's objective indicators that they do is even more of a crying need to get them into treatment."

Before the news conference, Christie toured a windowless garage of the Rescue Mission where people recovering from addiction worked to fill white plastic bottles with industrial lubricants used during tire changes. The shop, operated by Hutchinson Industries Inc., of Trenton, runs three shifts, employs 10 to 15 people at a time, and helps those completing drug treatment earn money to reestablish themselves.

Patrick Courtney, 55, of Pemberton, works full time in the shop as a quality-control manager. But for most of his adult life, he cycled in and out of prison, struggling with addiction to methamphetamines, cocaine, and eventually heroin.

His early stints in drug treatment did not work because, Courtney admits, "I only went there to get out of going to jail."

It was not until prison exhausted him that he finally made an effort to quit using drugs, and he accepted the help he was offered.

Forcing people into treatment might turn a few around, but not everyone, Courtney said. "Somebody's got to be ready; they've just got to be tired of going to prison, tired of that life."

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