

# Titus House Newsletter

Titus House Ministries, PO Box 2376, Tijeras, NM 87059

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2020



## PRESSURE BUILDS ON NEW YORK GOVERNOR TO ADDRESS CORONAVIRUS IMPACT ON PRISONERS (The Appeal)

Advocates are calling on New York Governor Andrew Cuomo this week to change his response to coronavirus to better serve the state's jail and prison populations.

Cuomo [announced](#) Monday that the state would produce up to 100,000 gallons per week of its own hand sanitizer to distribute to "high impact areas" and state agencies, including prisons, at no cost. But nearly [100 incarcerated people](#) will make the hand sanitizer for just cents an hour, and they may not be able to use it.

"Our governor is exploiting the unethical clause of the Thirteenth Amendment for his own gain," Eileen Maher, a community leader at VOCAL-NY, a nonprofit that advocates for criminal justice reform, said at a [press conference](#) on Tuesday morning. The amendment, which outlawed slavery, includes a loophole for "punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." Prisoners in the U.S. can be made to work for [less than a dollar an hour](#).

Corcraft, a state-run company that relies on prison labor to produce products for the state, will produce the hand sanitizer.

Prisoners who work for Corcraft are paid a minimum wage of \$0.16 an hour and can get increases up to \$0.65 per hour, according to the New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS). The last time prisoners in the state got a pay raise was [in 1993](#).

Those incarcerated may not be able to refuse the work, either. Prisoners are [required](#) to "participate in programs as assigned," including work assignments, and refusing to do so is considered a violation of rules that could result in loss of good time credits or being placed in solitary confinement.

Prisoners in New York State prisons are already [banned](#) from possessing most hand sanitizer because it contains alcohol; possessing it could result in being placed in solitary confinement. New York State's version will be 75 percent alcohol, according to the governor's office.

Advocates are also concerned about how New York prisons and jails will respond to coronavirus within their walls.

Prisoners are [particularly at risk](#) as they are housed in close quarters. Homer Venters, the former chief medical officer at Rikers Jail Complex [told](#) The Marshall Project, "Jails and prisons are often dirty and have really very little in the way of infection control," noting that there are many people using few sinks and bathrooms. There may not be access to soap, toilet paper, or paper towels, he added.

Past outbreaks of [the flu and other diseases](#) have resulted in jail deaths. People in jails and prisons also have higher rates of [chronic health conditions](#) such as HIV, asthma, and diabetes that make them particularly vulnerable to the virus. About 40 percent of all inmates have a chronic health condition, according to the Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights.

In a statement Monday, the Federal Defenders of New York [said](#) that the city's two federal jails are not prepared to handle a coronavirus outbreak because of a "lack of information and planning" and their "tight quarters and unsanitary conditions." A lockdown last week only worsened things, the attorneys wrote: "Many people are locked in small cells with a cellmate sharing a toilet and sink. Nobody has been able to shower more than once every three days. Bedsheets and clothes have not been cleaned in over a week."

Meanwhile, according to [documents obtained by The City](#), plans for how to deal with an outbreak in New York City jails include paying detainees as little as \$1 an hour to disinfect toilets and sinks, video conferences for court appearances, and ordering inmates to sleep head to toe and three apart, as well as medical screening and fever "watch points."

"The coronavirus is going to have devastating impacts on incarcerated men and women," said Jose Saldana, director of the Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) campaign. Saldana spent 38 years in New York State prisons himself and was released about two years ago. His group put out a statement Monday urging Cuomo to use his clemency power to release the elderly and infirm, those who are most at risk of contracting coronavirus. The U.S. prison population age 55 or older has [higher rates](#) of chronic health conditions.

"Why would we keep them in prison just to die, especially when there is a serious health crisis coming their way?" Saldana asked. "This is the only sane, rational, and fair and just solution."

Advocates and attorneys are also demanding that the state legislature pass pending criminal justice reform bills, which include a voting rights bill, a bill limiting solitary confinement, and two parole bills.

Cuomo did not respond to a request for comment on how the state will prepare for or handle coronavirus in prisons. Peter Thorne, DOCCS deputy commissioner for public information, said in a [statement](#) on March 3 that, "The Department is in close coordination, working with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention], NYC Department of Health, and Correctional Health Services to identify and evaluate detainees with potential symptoms and refer them for testing as necessary."

As of Tuesday, DOCCS said it had not had to test, treat, or quarantine anyone who is incarcerated. Prison staff are being advised to follow flu protocols and correction officers have the authority to refer anyone for a medical evaluation. DOCCS also said it has supplies and equipment at the ready to address the virus, and instituted a new screening protocol for visitors effective Monday.

"Incarcerated people and their families deserve better," Dave George, associate director of RAPP, said at the Tuesday press conference. "They are just as deserving of emergency and potentially life saving public health responses to this serious virus as any other New Yorker."



## NARSOL demands stoppage of in-person check-ins for those on the registry

We live in unprecedented times. Never before have semi-quarantine conditions been imposed across the entire country. Registrants especially, having a history of not knowing what to expect from law enforcement, are unsettled. Going into sheriff's offices or other places where registration verification is done is risky business these days, risky in ways never experienced before. Many registrants are senior citizens, and many, just like all senior citizens, have some serious health conditions. An exposure to the Corona-virus, COVID-19, could be disastrous, putting not only the regis-



trants but also the law enforcement or governmental personnel at risk along with the families and friends of all.

Mainstream media articles dealing with this issue reveal a definite trend: While more and more offices are closing to the general public wanting to conduct normal business, such as fill out a report or renew a driver's license, registered sexual offenders are still to report for their regularly scheduled verification checks. NARSOL finds this unacceptable, and March 20, 2020, a press release to media outlets across the nation calling for a suspension of all required in-person verifications during this crisis.

## New Mexico Corrections Department -FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Additional precautions in response to COVID-19 New temporary visitation changes to be implemented SANTA FE—The New Mexico Corrections Department is implementing new safeguards in association with statewide efforts to minimize the effect of COVID-19 in New Mexico. Effective immediately, all visitation is suspended through the end of April 2020. This includes the suspension of contact, non-contact, and attorney visits in all prison facilities. NMCD has recently implemented changes that will increase inmate access to phones. As previously mentioned, our Information and Technology Division will continue working on bringing video visits to state facilities.

## MEXICO: LOCAL CONGRESS APPROVES THE CREATION OF A SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY IN MEXICO CITY

March 15, 2020

Mexico City's Congress recently approved the creation of the Sex Offender Registry as part of a strategy to prevent Sexual abuse.

Eduardo Santillán Pérez, the head of the Justice Commission, presented the bill and explained that in order to create the Sex Offender Registry, lawmakers agreed to reform the criminal code and at least 2 laws.

According to the bill, criminals will appear in the registry 10 and 30 years, depending on the crimes perpetrated.





## Michigan State Police Turning Away Pre-2011 Registrants -by Fred

Last week it came to NARSOL's attention that there had been a sudden new development in the Does v. Snyder case. Michigan State Police have decided that at this time they will not be registering anyone whose sexual offense conviction occurred prior to the April 2011 changes in the statute. A copy of the memorandum was faxed to Michigan ACLU. This decision appears to be due to the February 14 court [order by District Court Judge Robert Cleland](#) that gives Michigan legislators sixty days to change the law so that it is in compliance with the 2016 ruling by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals.

This development has created widespread confusion among Michigan registrants as the law has not yet been changed and is still very much in the statutes. It appears that Michigan State Police are giving registrants convicted prior to April 2011 permission to ignore the law while not providing any further information or confirmation that they do not need to register at this time. Also, local sheriff departments are not necessarily bound to the rules and policy changes of the state police and may decide to continue registering pre-2011 registrants.



Michigan ACLU is advising registrants to try to register anyway and, if refused, to try to get something in writing that says they do not need to register at this time. If that is also refused, registrants should take steps to document their visit themselves. Write down the date and time you attempted to register and the name of the sheriff deputy or state trooper you spoke with. While this law is still on the books and no confirmation has been provided, it is important that registrants take steps to protect themselves.

Michigan ACLU also advises that this

does not mean pre-2011 registrants are coming off the registry. It merely means that at this time the state police are not registering them when they come in for their quarterly or bi-annually verification. This could change at any time, and pre-2011 registrants may be ordered to resume registering as usual while state legislators revise the law.

We are paying attention to this case and will post updates as new developments are announced. In the meantime, Michigan registrants should do their best to continue following the SORNA law as written.

## ALICE'S RECIPE FOR TRYING TIMES

My recipe for these stressful times is found in two Scripture passages. Pastor Mike Potter of Foothills Church went online from his backyard Sunday morning. He preached to us from a setting of a picnic table with Sandia Mountain in the background. The setting made us relaxed as we saw the unchangeable mountain, the blue sky and realized God has it all in control. His Biblical basis for his challenge was Psalm 46:10 – "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations." My favorite Psalm is 91 that was claimed by the widow of one of the five martyrs whose gave their lives in the jungles of South America. I was in Wheaton years ago with Betty Elliot and little did I realize that a few

years later her husband and four others would give their lives in a hot humid jungle. As a result of their sacrifice virtually a whole tribe of primitive natives would become Christians.

We believe the Bible and that the book of Psalms was written just for us as we are struggling right now to make sense of this pandemic. Scripture is full of cases of divine rescue. Why do we doubt that God is still on His throne grabbing us at the last moment sometimes to prove His power over disaster? In Ps. 91 God gives us a long list of possible terrors only to conclude with verse 7: "A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you."

I hope and pray that when you read these words you relax and trust God

for saving your life. I have done that many times in my long life as I was tempted to doubt in the midst of the storms of life. If you need prayer or reassurance please call on Don or me or your pastor who is ready to help. God bless each of you reading this. We would love to hear from you.

*NOTE: I was told by the Bernalillo Sex Offender Tracking Unit that due to this coronavirus that they will not be having people check into their office in person. They will be contacting you by phone a week before your check in date. Make sure they have your current telephone number. You can contact them at (505) 468-7678 or if you have problems contact Krystal at (505) 476-2438.*





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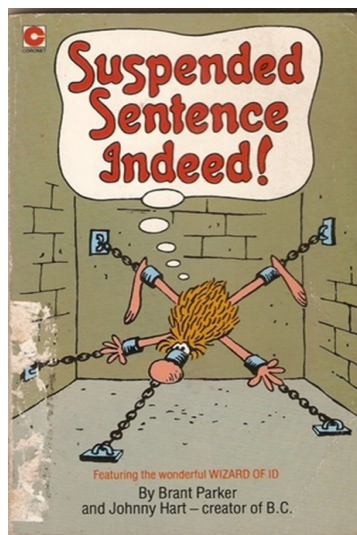
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Hebrew 13:3 - Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Remember if you change your address you need to let us know if you want to continue to receive this newsletter



## Circle of Concern

Circle of Concern is aimed at breaking down isolation and fear by providing a safe place for registrants and their loved ones to get together, build community, and learn ways to step out and take charge of their lives and overcome the

stigma they face. The Circle of Concern is a group of concerned registered citizens, family and friends that meet together on the 3rd Sunday of each month. **We will not be meeting this month due to the coronavirus.** We normally meet at Foothills Fellowship

Church, corner of Tramway and Candelaria on the far east side of Albuquerque. We encourage and try to help each other. It is a safe place to share our strengths and struggles. In the future we hope you will join us. If you are planning to attend call Don at (505) 315-7940

## Where Will This Lead?

by Alan Sorensen

I remember a time when my daughter, Pandora, asked me why most people are concerned only with the present. I told her, they have this idea: spend it today, enjoy it today, and take no thought of the future.

She is truly her mother's daughter. At her age I would have never given it a thought how we would be so much happier if we were only conscious of the future. As I now think about it, perhaps all of us should be asking, "Where will this lead?"

Some decisions are choices between doing something and doing nothing.

Not having a formal education beyond the third grade until I took my GED at 47, I remember taking my daughter to a beautiful college campus in Coldwell, Idaho. The setting sun was as new to me as Pandora. We sat with a crowd of young students, all seated on the grass as speaker after speaker described great ideas about the future to guide our actions today.

As we all listened, there was a beautiful tree squirrel with a large, bush tail playing around the base of a huge hardwood tree. Sometimes it was on the ground, sometimes up and down and around the trunk chittering playfully. But why would such a familiar sight in farm country attract the full attention of a crowd of students, teachers and parents?

Stretched out prone on the grass nearby was a speckled blue heeler, a handsome dog. He was the object of everyone's interest, and squirrel was the object of his. Each time the squirrel was momentarily out of sight, circling the tree, the heeler would quietly creep forward a few inches, and then resume his apparently indifferent posture. I remember thinking, "This is what's holding everyone's profound interest." Silent and immobile, everyone's eyes were riveted on an event whose outcome was increasingly

obvious.

Finally, the blue heeler was close enough to bound at the poor innocent squirrel and catch it in his mouth. A gasp of horror arose. Pandora cried out and pushed her face against my chest as a crowd of people ran forward to try and wrestle the little animal away from the dog, but it was already far too late. The little bushy tailed squirrel was dead.

Anyone in that crowd, myself as well, could have warned the squirrel at any time by simply crying out or running the animal off from around the tree so the dog would have never had the chance to catch it, but no one did. All of us just watched while the inevitable outcome got closer and closer. No one asked, "Where will this lead?" When the predictable occurred, all rushed to prevent the outcome, but it was too late. Our tearful regret was all we could offer.

This true story is a parable of sorts. It applies to things we see in our own lives and in the lives and circumstances of those around us. As we see threats creeping up on persons or things we love, we have a choice of speaking, acting or remaining silent. It is well to ask, "Where will this lead?"

I tell you, my brothers and sisters in prison, advocates, and legislators, the consequences of doing nothing are immediate and serious. We must sound appropriate warnings and prevent other lives from being lost in these prisons. If you want dignity and human rights then things must change. We must change as a people inside these walls and out, or we will become the squirrel.

For Dianne, my friend and teacher...



Jesus is the reason for the season  
Happy Easter