

Titus House Newsletter

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

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Prisoners fighting California fires denied licenses after release

August 20, 2018 CCRC Staff
by Nick Sibilla, USA Today,
August 20, 2018

Nick Sibilla, a legislative analyst at the Institute for Justice, has published this fine op ed piece in today's USA Today, describing how the 2,000 state prisoners currently engaged in fighting the largest fire in California history, are barred from obtaining the necessary EMT license that would enable them to continue this work after their release. It contains, inter alia, a description of the two bills currently pending in the California legislature that would end what Nick describes as a "bitterly ironic" situation, where prisoners gain valuable training in certain vocations that they cannot use after their release. The piece seems particularly relevant, in light of the amazing work being done on occupational licensing reform across the country, much of it inspired by the Institute for Justice's Model Collateral Consequences in Occupational Licensing Act. See, e.g. New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Kansas, Indiana, Arizona, and Tennessee. We hope California will soon join this group of enlightened jurisdictions, and that other states will follow in the coming year.

Despite fighting California's largest fires, inmates are denied licenses they need to become firefighters after they get out.

As California struggles to contain the largest fire in state history, more than 2,000 inmates have volunteered to fight the flames. Offering just \$1 an hour, the state has long encouraged low-level prisoners to risk their lives and serve along-

— a credential that can be denied to almost anyone with a criminal record.

Many are denied jobs for their criminal record

Nor are firefighters the only position off-limits. Under California law, the state's

occupational and business licensing laws contain over 27,000 restrictions on ex-offenders, including bans on working as barbers or hosting bingo games. Those barriers impose significant costs. Research by the Center for Economic and Policy estimates that in 2014, employment barriers for the incarcerated and those with felony convictions cost the nation's economy up to \$87 billion in annual GDP, equal to "the loss of 1.7 to 1.9 million workers."

Not only do these policies slam the door on economic opportunity, they may also increase re-offending. A recent study from Arizona State University found that states with more burdensome licensing laws saw their average recidivism rates jump by nine percent. By comparison, states with fewer licensing restrictions and no moralizing provisions had recidivism rates decline by 2.5 percent, on average. In fact, licensing burdens were second only to the overall labor market climate when it came to influencing recidivism rates.

Note: From Alice and Inmate "Tiger" (Steven) from Colorado who is a Registered Citizen told us:

Tiger was recruited to fight fires with a group of men from prison. The fire headed toward them and thought they were dead. A circle of five men prayed, the fire shifted and they were saved.



side professional firefighters, who earn nearly \$74,000 a year on average. Firefighting, along with less life-threatening trades like plumbing, welding, and cosmetology, is one of several vocational training programs offered to prisoners by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

But in a bitterly ironic twist, once inmates leave prison, they often can't work as firefighters, despite their frontline experience. In California, nearly all counties require firefighters to become licensed emergency medical technician (EMTs)

licensing boards can deny a credential on the basis of an applicant's criminal record or alleged misconduct. Thanks to the rise in occupational licensing, nearly 1,800 occupations now require a license, certification, or clearance in the Golden State, affecting one-fourth of California's workforce. As a result, hundreds of different occupations are effectively barred to roughly 8 million Californians.

California's firefighting felons are a particularly stark illustration of a growing, national problem. According to the American Bar Association, the nation's



“BAN THE BOX” MAKES HIRING FAIRER FOR JOB APPLICANTS WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS, BUT MORE COMPLEX FOR BUSINESSES

BY DANIELECHOFCCTI

Applying for a job can be an arduous task these days. It can be made more stressful for job applicants with criminal records. Research affirms that a conviction record reduces the likelihood of a job callback or offer by nearly 50%, according to the National Employment Law Project (NELP). It also can be stressful for employers, who want to be fair, want to follow the law, but also want to make the best hires for their open job positions.

More and more, state and local governments are passing “ban the box” laws that prohibit hiring discrimination against applicants with criminal records. It’s an important step towards helping employ more of the 70 million U.S. adults with arrests or convictions, many

of whom the NELP says are turned away from jobs despite their skills and qualifications. For companies that are willing to take a chance on ex-felons, federal programs like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) provide real economic incentives.

So what is “ban the box”? In essence, it is a rule that prohibits an employer from requesting the criminal history of an applicant at the start of a hiring process. The concept is that by banning this information at the start of the application process, applicants are reviewed first for the skills they would bring to the job, not for mistakes they have made in their past, thus giving them a fair chance to compete for job openings.



It’s an old concept that is receiving renewed attention. Hawaii has had “ban the box” regulations in place since 1998. More than a decade later, other states began looking more seriously at the concept. Since 2010, NELP reports that 28 other states have passed “ban the box” laws: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Hello all. My name is John Gallagher.

I want you all to know (those who are locked up) that life outside the prison system is not so bad. I understand that being on parole and probation is hard. That all depends on how you go about it. I have been out of the prison system for two years now. It feels so good to be accepted back into the community. I've had some bumps and bruises, but every day I thank the Lord for guidance. The Lord has blessed me in so many ways. Let me tell you a little about myself. I am originally from the state of New York and came to New Mexico and met a 14 year old girl to have sex with her. To this day, I regret everything that I have done. I have been placed in the prison system since 2008. I was released back in 2013 and of course, I violated the conditions of probation within 6 months. I went back in the system and completed the probation in house and did 6 more months on in-house parole. While I was in prison, I did my time at the Otero County Prison Facility in Chaparral NM. That is when I began having contact with the Titus House Ministries. A friend of mine

introduced me to Don and Alice Johnston. That person is Ryan T. I was released again in late 2016 and did 4 months of parole. I completed my parole and moved on with my life. Since then I have been in constant contact with Don and Alice. They have been there for me I have first made that phone call at the prison. They have helped me in so many ways. I am so blessed to know these two wonderful people in my life. This day, I am living in a wonderful neighborhood a good place to live. The community has accepted me as a human being. I am forever grateful for it. I have been going to a place called The Foothills Fellowship here in Albuquerque with Don and Alice and others who are on the sex offender registry, there is even one of us playing in music worship. I have been there for more than a year and a half and I love going there. I also have a job there working as a janitor there plus I go to CNM at the Montoya campus studying culinary Arts. Don't say just you're a sex offender and it's hard to survive in the free world. Trust me when I say this,

it's not hard at all. You may have some bumps and bruises along the way, that's normal. If I can do it, then you can do it also. Again if it wasn't for Don and Alice, I wouldn't be here right where I'm at. Thank you Don and Alice for giving me all the support and confidence. Bless you both for the help you both have given me.



John Gallagher in Utah



MO: NEW LAW EXPECTED TO REDUCE MISSOURI'S SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY COUNT

By Alisa Nelson, from Missouri.net August 20, 2018 ·

Missouri has about 19,300 people listed on its sex offender registry. That figure is expected to decline soon because of a law taking effect this month.

St. Charles Republican State Rep. Kurt Bahr, who sponsored the provisions included in a Senate bill, tells Missouri.net the changes will show three levels of sex offenders, instead of one, depending on the severity of the crime committed.

"My goal wasn't to recreate the wheel. It was simply to make sure that we are fully compliant with the federal law that is fully established and to make sure we have a clean and clear process that everybody knew and understood," Bahr says. "We don't necessarily need to be punishing people for an entire life because they happen to be peeing in public and got charged with indecent expo-

sure. With everything, there has to be balance. I thought that adopting the federal law was the best balance we could do today."



Donations — by Don Johnston

Very few people in prison donate to Titus House. Those who do donate, give \$5.00 a month or postage stamps, which we really do appreciate. Others who have the means donate more. I know it is hard to make it in prison on the pay they give you, since I myself was in prison for 14 years. If it wasn't for the help of family, I am not sure how I would have made it. I did sell a few of my drawings and painting. I just want to encourage you to help Titus House Min-

istries, if you can. Instead of eating a few soups transfer your tithe or contribution to help us. We cannot continue to do this ministry without your help. It costs us about \$400 a month to send out the newsletters and respond to incoming letters. Then we have computers and internet service, collect telephone calls, buying newly released Registered Citizens clothing, backpacks, bus passes, shoes, work clothes, and other items to help them reintegrate back into socie-

ty. We transport people to church, hunt down furniture and deliver it to those moving into apartments. There are many other things that Titus House is happy to do for our brothers and sisters inside and outside the walls of prison. We hope that you will join us in supporting those that society call the modern day lepers, which we call children of God. Thank you for your support and prayers.

To Jackson, MS: No reason to exclude registered sexual offenders from program

In response to this article, this was emailed 8/10/18 to each of the four addressees:

Dear Jackson Free Press, Jackson Mayor Chokwe A. Lumumba, chief administrative officer Robert Blaine, and Larry Perry, president and CEO of New Way Mississippi:

As an organization that deals with and advocates for returning citizens, NAR-SOL has tremendous respect for the decisions that have been made by you in creating and initiating this work program.

However, as an organization whose full name is the National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws, we are appalled at the statement, "...with the exception of sex offenders," especially as it appears in juxtaposition with the statement that both violent and non-violent persons are eligible for the program.

So, due to this decision, the man who

had pre-marital sex with the woman now his wife when she was 15 or 16 or, in some states, 17, is shut out of even applying for this work program, but the man who killed his friend in a drunken bar fight is eligible. Those who committed armed robbery and may have hurt or killed innocent people in the process are welcomed, but those who had a single image of a scantily-clad, underage teenager on their computers are denied. We commend you for including those whose criminal records include violence. We are totally unable to understand why this is not extended to those whose criminal records reflect a sexual offense.

What do you fear? As a group, those with sexual offense convictions have the lowest reoffense rate of all classifications of crime with the exception of those who have murdered. A significant percentage of sexual convictions are for non-violent offenses. Surely the screen-

ing done for behavioral issues will identify the rare registered sex offender who might pose a threat to others just as it will identify those with other categories of crime who would not be a good fit for the program.

We ask you to reconsider your decision. The vast majority of individuals on the sex offender registry are exactly the type of individuals who would benefit from your program. They struggle to support themselves and their families. They are and have been living law-abiding lives since a single conviction — for some, decades ago. They have a wide variety of talents and abilities to offer. They, above all, will be grateful for the opportunity, for they above all know the pain of being excluded based on nothing but a label that covers a vast multitude of behaviors.

Your program is innovative, wonderful, and a win-win for everyone involved, especially the community. Please extend it so that all who could benefit at least have a chance.



Titus House Ministries

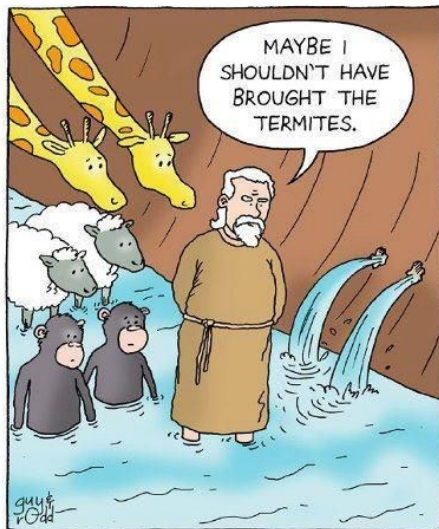
PO Box 2376
Tijeras, NM 87059

Phone: (505) 286-8807
Alice's Cell (505) 259-0867
Don's Cell: (505) 315-7940
Email: donmagicjohnston@gmail.com

We're on the Web
titushouseministries.org

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



Editorial by Alice

I'd like to be as smart as a hummingbird... These creatures are the smallest bird in North America – about 2 ounces but they can fly so fast one can hardly see them. They winter in South America and in the summer they appear in my garden. The males are brightly colored red and gold whose colors are dazzling in the sunlight. They can eat and hover at the same time, not actually having to touch my bird feeder. Incidentally, God still makes hummingbirds (and all his creatures) males and females. Those who manage to breed same sex do not reproduce. Should men who are usually in drab suits join male birds and turn out in dazzling colors? Was that perhaps the purpose in football uniforms? Should we perhaps put the thought in the minds of those look-alikes in Washington?

Why do we try to change the way God made us? The story of my teen and young adult years is both sad and hilarious! I tried dying my hair (actually rather simply according to today's standards). But the day a bunch of



dark suited men interrogated me for the job of overseas missions I was asked nervously if I had "died my hair." In those days, it would have been a mark of gross unspirituality. I hesitatingly replied that I had just dyed it back to its original color. As I held my breath the group of men gruffly (I thought) agreed to accept me as a foreign missionary. About that time, I had dyed my hair black for a Halloween party and I was "recovering" from that poor choice.

At perched in my late 80's I have relaxed a bit and now enjoy compliments on my white hair. Many people today are not happy with God's design. Women in high heels fall and break their legs. Cosmetic surgery has permanently ruined good-looking faces. Some get their skin burned because they want to be brown and others spend money and hours bleaching their skin to look white. Strict diets produce starvation or ill health.

Hummingbirds do not have to look for jobs. God takes care of them. Want to know God's life plan for you? Check with your local hummingbirds.



Amazing Grace

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 offenders, family and friends that meet together on the 3rd Sunday of each month. We are meeting this month on September 16, 2018 at 4 pm—6 pm. We will be having a potluck. We meet at Foothills Fel-



lowship 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. We hope you will join us. If you are planning to attend call Don at (505) 315-7940.