

Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (M-PAC)

maineprisoneradvocacy.org

September 15, 2011

P.O. Box 873
Ellsworth ME 04605

Dear Friends,

This is a quick general letter to ask you to spread the word about a September 24th M-PAC meeting from 9:30-12:30 (doors open 9 am). Please tell others in case they have family or friends who would like to attend. Anyone interested in prisoner advocacy is welcome. IBEW Hall, 16 Old Winthrop Road, Manchester (outside Augusta). *By the way, M-PAC is not part of IBEW; we're only using their facility for the meeting.*

Most prisoner requests/complaints/alerts that come to M-PAC are sent to the Commissioner, or to outside groups that may be able to assist. The Commissioner is open to receiving information from M-PAC. We expect changes in the prisons to continue happening, and we depend on those inside to keep us informed. We are in reality about ongoing problems.

By the way, if you have positive reports about changes in the prisons, please pass those comments along with the things that aren't going well. When we send a list of requests or complaints – or meet to discuss – it's helpful to share positives too.

Motivated by an idea from inmates, M-PAC very much wants to have Maine's overall sentencing guidelines studied. We hope that someone will bring this idea to the three branches of government – legislative, judicial, and the governor – and convince them to invite The Sentencing Project to initiate such a study. The Sentencing Project often works with the assistance of the Pew Foundation. Many states have already used their services and adopted all or some of their recommendations with very positive results.

M-PAC hopes to identify a person or group in Maine to take on this project and bring it to the right people to move it forward – perhaps one or more judges, an association of lawyers, one or more effective legislators, or others. We have attempted to get this moving with certain legislators; so far without success. Some of you have been in touch with The Sentencing Project and may have ideas about bringing this to the powers that can make it happen. Please do whatever you can on this, and share ideas with M-PAC for a coordinated effort.

We heard that mail has temporarily been stopped to the blog for inmates' letters and essays. As always, people are welcome to write to M-PAC with their situations. We work with many outside individuals and groups connected to inmate advocacy in diverse ways.

Anything you can do to spread the word about the dangers of private (for-profit) prisons is important for every Mainer. The prison that some – fortunately not all – Milo citizens would like to have built by Corrections Corporation of America wouldn't necessarily be a federal prison. In fact, CCA may not even want a prison in Milo or another Maine community. CCA simply wants the law changed that prevents Maine's prisoners from being shipped to private prisons out of state. The idea of building a prison in Milo – or elsewhere – is a way that this private corporation and its lobbyists hope to pass legislation that opens the door for Maine inmates to fill their prison beds far from home. M-PAC worked many hours through the winter and spring on this issue, hosting community forums, talking with legislators, and working with advocacy groups around the country. Many individuals and groups will continue to oppose CCA's attempts to change laws, including M-PAC, MCLU, NAACP, Maine Council of Churches, and others.

With good wishes,

Judy Garvey and Jim Bergin, for MPAC