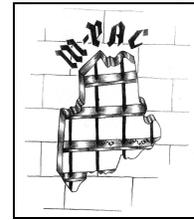


**Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (M-PAC)**  
maineprisoneradvocacy.org



P.O. Box 873  
Ellsworth, ME 04605

March 4, 2011

Greetings from M-PAC,

We are pleased to be writing about what M-PAC is doing on the outside to bring more positive and humane changes inside Maine's prisons and jails. We continue to focus this work on the ideas received from you. Although M-PAC's newsletter, *The Call*, is delayed, this update letter contains the most immediate news.

**NEW DOC COMMISSIONER:** There have been many changes in Maine since the November elections. As you know, one of the biggest is the appointment by Gov. LePage of Joseph Ponte to replace Marty Magnusson as DOC Commissioner. How this new appointment plays out remains to be seen. Members of M-PAC plan to meet with Mr. Ponte to bring our goals to his attention, as well as a list of concerns we've gathered from many of you. Establishing a relationship with Mr. Ponte should help bring awareness and oversight of difficulties and/or abuses that take place on the inside.

**PRIVATE PRISON ISSUES:** Somewhat related to Mr. Ponte, who has run prisons for Corrections Corporation of America, in other parts of the country, M-PAC is against any use of private prisons – whether in Maine or elsewhere. There have been news reports about the town of Milo's hopes to have a CCA private prison built there, to be used as a transit depot for certain Federal prisoners. Many Mainers are mobilizing to oppose this plan if it goes forward. We invite others to join in this effort. Please send your opinions and let families and friends know that their help is needed.

**VICTOR VALDEZ (R.I.P.):** M-PAC members – inside MSP and outside – have sought answers since November 2009 for the untimely and tragic death of Victor Valdez. There is more in the works at this moment, and we'll keep you in the loop as actions develop. One positive result of this horrendous case is LD168, a bill initiated by M-PAC to ensure that evidence about the cause of a prisoner's death won't ever be destroyed again (*see below*).

**LEGISLATION:**

**LD168: Medical Exam/Autopsy Bill:** This bill, which is unopposed by the Medical Examiner's Office and the DOC, provides for a Medical Examiner's Report and an Autopsy for any individual who dies while in custody, whether in prison, jail, hospital, ambulance, or wherever. It will ensure that any death, whether suspicious or not, is examined to determine the cause. This will help prevent the destruction of evidence, and expose abuse that may have occurred prior to a death. \*\* **Action:** Please write to Sen. Garrett Mason and Rep. Gary Plummer, Chairs, and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee, c/o Legislative Information, 100 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333. Ask for their vote to pass LD168. If your funds allow, please send a copy of your letter to M-PAC, P.O. Box 873, Ellsworth, ME 04605.

**LD 690: An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Transfer of Prisoners to Other States**  
LD 690 would empower inmates to have some control over being transferred, and how long they remain out of State. In essence, an inmate could not be transferred, according to the bill, unless there is a Court order and a hearing with representation. If an inmate is transferred he or

she can elect to return to Maine after one year. We have sent a separate letter to Maine's out-of-state prisoners, asking them to write legislators about this bill and about being incarcerated in another state. (Note: LD690 has nothing to do with the "for profit" prisons discussion going on since Gov. LePage's election. As you probably know, the DOC was already sending some people to out of state public prisons for various reasons.)

**\*\*Action:** Please write to Sen. Garrett Mason, Chair, Rep. Gary Plummer, Chair, and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee, c/o Legislative Information, 100 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333 and ask for their vote to pass LD690. If your funds allow, please send a copy of your letter to us at M-PAC, P.O. Box 873, Ellsworth, ME 04605.

**LD 152: Employment Discrimination Bill:** Initiated by a former Inmate, this was designed to make it illegal for a potential employer to discriminate against hiring a felon. Unfortunately, the Bill was voted "ought not to pass" by the Commerce Committee. Serious discussions took place and many people supported the bill. This will be put forward again in the next session, either in this format or that used by other states, including Massachusetts, which recently enacted the CORI "Ban the Box" law, removing the box on applications that asks for criminal background. Though applicants can still be asked this question, or have records checked, the new MA law makes it possible for an individual to get past the first hurdle toward an interview.

**Positive Parole Bill:** Sponsored by CUREMaine this bill seeks to reinstate Parole in a very positive way. Maine is one of approximately ten states without Parole. They have exhaustively researched the positive, as well as the negative, aspects of this bill, and has carefully written it in a way to make all stakeholders winners: prisoners, victims, DOC, state, and community. The hearing might not take place until later in March. **\*\*Actions on behalf of CUREMaine's efforts:** Send a letter to your representative. You are legally from the town where you were living at the time of arrest. The first line should say something like: "I am a constituent of yours." Then write out your own story. Please send a copy to CUREMaine, 23 Washington St., Sanford, ME 04073, or M-PAC (see address below - If you send to M-PAC, we will forward to CUREMaine). Please state whether or not your name can be used. Personal stories are most effective, and we can read from your letter at the hearing. The story does not have to be long – just a true story of people with medical or family needs and positive behavior in prison. If a family member can testify, please let us know. Ask your family and friends to attend the hearing to support Positive Parole. CUREMaine needs many supporters to plead for a second chance for people. Also write to Sen. Garrett Mason, Chair, Rep. Gary Plummer, Chair, and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee, c/o Legislative Information, 100 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333 and ask for their vote to pass Positive Parole.

**M-PAC ADDRESS CHANGE:** Once again, for the sake of efficiency, we have moved M-PAC's address. If you have written and not received a response, we invite you to send another letter.

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**P.O. Box 873**  
**Ellsworth, ME 04605** (It's OK to shorten the first line to "M-PAC")

Please continue to share your thoughts on how we can best move forward toward effective changes in Maine's jails and prisons. While our goal is to respond to each letter, we promise that every insight and experience shared will guide the advocacy that M-PAC does on behalf of all who are confined to DOC's facilities.

Good wishes,

Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (M-PAC)