



Opinion

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Support the Equal Protection Voting Act

The November, 2000 Presidential election was rife with problems, and often those problems resulted in the disenfranchisement of ethnic minority voters. As a result of technical and mechanical problems, as well as voter intimidation, voter suppression and voter disenfranchisement's tens of thousands of Americans were denied their basic right to cast a free vote and to have that vote counted.

In response to these problems,

Congressman John Conyers, D-Mich. and Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn. have introduced the "Equal Protection of Voting Rights Act."

This legislation, which has the support of the NAACP as well as the AFL-CIO, the National Council of La Raza and the National Organization for Women, among others, ensures non-discriminatory, equal access to the electoral process for all voters.

Specifically, this bill provides

resources for uniformed training of all poll workers as well as ensuring that all voting procedures are the same.

The bill would launch an aggressive voter education initiative so that all potential, new and existing voters would know how to make their voices heard as well as establishing a uniformed standard for the utilization of provisional ballots when voter's registration status is at question on Election Day.

The legislation would also enhance the integrity of absentee ballots and put systems into place to maintain up-to-date voter rolls. Furthermore, the bill would establish a clear standard for bilingual ballots for language minorities and the disabled and the bill provides the funding necessary to ensure that all changes and upgrades are carried out. Lastly, the bill would require each state to reexamine, simplify and standardize voter re-enfranchisement laws.

This last point is especially important to the NAACP, which has found that many states currently use ex-felony offender disenfranchisement laws as a means of keeping people of color out of the voting booth whether they are ex-felons or not.

Perhaps most important, the legislation calls on the states to look into voter intimidation, real and perceived, and to reexamine if they are in full compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Prison Director Answers Questions on Consolidation

By Dave Cook
DIRECTOR, OREGON DEPARTMENT OF PRISONS

The Oregon Department of Corrections is implementing a plan to streamline the way we hold offenders accountable and provide services to meet their needs. As we implement these efficiencies, I wanted to take this opportunity to provide answers to questions you may have about the possible effects of these changes on inmates and their families. Correctional programs are an important part of the Oregon prison experience. Alcohol and drug treatment, addiction treatment, job training, education and other programs all help improve the chance that offenders will become responsible citizens upon release. They also make productive use of inmate's time while incarcerated. In an effort to ensure that inmates receive the service they need while reducing the cost of delivering programs, the Department of Corrections designed a more efficient delivery system. The Inmate Management and Transition System eliminates costly redundancies by consolidating programs in the state's 13 prisons.

Rather than duplicate part-time programs in every prison, it makes more sense to fortify the quality and boost attendance of most programs by offering them more often in fewer prisons. Each prison will be able to specialize, capitalizing on what they do best given their local resources, physical facility, and custody level.

Prison housing assignments are largely determined by each inmate's incarceration plan. All inmates are tested when they enter the state prison system and a set of objectives is laid out for them to accomplish while incar-

cerated. These plans reach beyond incarcerated and into the transition time to the community following release. Inmates will be transferred among prisons that offer the programs specified in their incarceration plans. For instance, an inmate who needs to learn to read and doesn't have any job skills will first go to a prison that has Adult Basic Education programs and then may transfer to a prison that trains him in a trade. Then he will likely move to a prison where he can use those new skills in a job. The last year of his sentence, he will move to a prison that specializes in transition so he can learn how to succeed upon release."

Here are the answers to some of your questions we've heard:

How is this different?

Up to now, prisons offered a full menu of programs. Under IMATS, prisons will specialize and staff will be able to provide the best quality programs. Additionally, space within prisons will be used for programs that fit well with its design and classroom space will be more fully used.

Are you going to be eliminating programs?

We don't think so. Since programs will be moved to the most appropriate prisons, it might appear that they have been discontinued. In actuality, they've been consolidated into fewer locations.

Are inmates going to be able to access the programs in their incarceration plans?

Yes. As we envision IMATS, if a program is identified in an inmate's incarceration plan, the inmate will be transferred to a prison that offers that type of program.

Are you going to be able to

save money with this new plan?

Yes. We know that duplicating services 13 times across the state is expensive and redundant. The Correctional Programs Division within the Department of Corrections anticipates saving approximately \$12 million in the next biennium while providing essentially the same level of service. This fresh look at how the department delivers programs will enable us to continue to provide necessary programs within the Governor's recommended budget.

Is there a logical order to the programs?

Yes. Incarceration plans generally map out programs that build upon each other. Adult Basic Education requirements must be satisfied before inmates can pursue a GED, for instance. Inmates must be trained in a job before they can be expected to perform that job, so clearly training would precede a job assignment.

When an inmate finishes his education and treatment programs, is it inevitable that he will be transferred to Eastern Oregon to a prison that specializes in work programs?

No. Inmate's placements are determined by their incarceration plans. There are prisons on both sides of the Cascades that offer programs, and there are prisons on both sides of the Cascades that provide work opportunities.

Where will you be providing specific programs?

Some of the details are still being worked out, but the prisons will tentatively focus on the following categories:

Intake and Assessment: Coffee Creek Correctional Facility near Wilsonville.

Education: Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Pendleton; Oregon State Penitentiary, Salem; Oregon State Correctional Institution, Salem; Columbia River Correctional Institution, Portland; and South Fork Forest Camp, Tillamook.

Work and Training: South Fork; Two Rivers Correctional Institution, Umatilla; Snake River Correctional Institution, Ontario; Oregon State Penitentiary; and Oregon State Correctional Institution.

Work and Release Planning: Santiam Correctional Institution, Salem; Coffee Creek; Powder River Correctional Facility, Baker City; Shutter Creek Correctional Institution, North Bend; Columbia River; South Fork; Oregon State Correctional Institution; and Snake River.

Mental Health: Snake River; Oregon State Penitentiary; Oregon State Correctional Institution; Eastern Oregon; and Columbia River.

How do I learn more about IMATS?
The Department of Corrections invites families to provide emotional support and encouragement to loved ones who are incarcerated. To learn more, contact by phone, mail or e-mail, your family member's prison counselor. If you are unsure about how to do that, or if you have other questions of general concern, you may contact the Department of Corrections at 503-945-8877 for assistance.

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