

Many rooting for inmates after credit bug exposed on devices

By REBECCA BOONE
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Officials say it was “intentional exploitation,” while some inmates’ families described it as more of a “glitch.”

Either way, reports that 364 Idaho inmates had a quarter-million dollars in credits improperly applied to their JPay tablet accounts had many on social media rooting for the prisoners.

Officials said the improper credits occurred when individuals placed products in their digital shopping carts and then removed them in a way that created a credit that was added to their total funds available.

Idaho Department of Correction investigators discovered the issue earlier this month, and the department has taken disciplinary action against those who received credits, contending the actions were intentional.

The hand-held computer tablets are popular in prisons across the country, and they are made available to Idaho inmates through a contract with CenturyLink and JPay. The tablets allow inmates to email their families and friends, purchase and listen to music or play simple electronic games.

The services come at a steep cost for inmates and their loved ones. For example, sending a one-page email from an Idaho prison costs about 50 cents.

Idaho inmates who have prison jobs make between 10 and 90 cents an hour. That means some inmates must work five hours to afford to send one email.

Cheaper options aren’t available, since JPay and similar companies negotiate with prison facilities to hold monopoly contracts that



In this 2010 file photo, inmates walk to the dining hall from their cell block at the Idaho State Correctional Institution outside Boise, Idaho. Officials say it was an “intentional exploitation,” while some inmates’ families described it more as a “glitch.”

make them the only provider of email and other services.

The recent hack — or glitch, depending on who you ask — seemed akin to a Robin Hood story for some.

Cara Berg Powers, executive director of the Transformative Culture Project in Massachusetts, was among those voicing support for the inmates on Twitter.

“Because we keep using technology and private corporations to make experiences for prisoners and their loved ones less and less humane,” she wrote in one tweet.

She went on to say the inmates should all be offered coding jobs, and joked that the credits likely were only enough to purchase a single bag of chips.

It’s hard to feel bad when a company that charges 47 cents for an email accidentally lets some people send emails for free, said Peter Wagner, executive director of Prison Policy Institute, an advocacy group that has fought to limit the prices companies can charge inmates for things like phone calls.

“These are the poor-

est folks in the state ... and they are being asked to pay unreasonable sums of money to stay in touch with their loved ones,” Wagner said, noting that one in four women in America have an incarcerated loved one.

JPay spokesperson Jade Trombetta said in a prepared statement that the company invests millions of dollars to create secure products and pointed out that the price of an email typically runs less than a stamp.

“These products help incarcerated Americans stay connected with loved ones, provide access to educational tools, assist in the rehabilitation process and offer other services that would otherwise be unavailable in jails and prisons,” Trombetta said.

Idaho Department of Correction spokesman Jeff Ray has stressed that the agency believes inmates deliberately took advantage of the issue to boost their own accounts.

“This conduct was intentional, not accidental. It required a knowledge of the JPay system and multiple actions by every inmate

who exploited the system’s vulnerability,” Ray said in a prepared statement.

Of the 364 inmates who allegedly exploited the issue, 50 credited their accounts in amounts exceeding \$1,000. One inmate had a credit that was just under \$10,000. In all, a total of nearly \$225,000 was directed into inmate accounts.

Ray said the inmates involved were being given disciplinary offense reports by prison officials, which means they could lose privileges or be moved to stricter security classification levels. The disciplinary reports can also hurt an inmate’s chance of receiving parole.

Melissa King of Douglasville, Georgia, said her brother, an Idaho inmate, is nearing his release date but now fears he won’t get out because he received a disciplinary report after receiving a \$380 credit from JPay.

She said her brother described the credit as a “misapplied payment from JPay” that he did nothing to obtain.

“I’m trying to get to the bottom of it from states away,” King said. “They’re saying that it was basically a misapplied payment, something that can happen with your bank or anybody else.”

King said her family is willing to pay back the money, but first she wants an itemized statement from JPay showing the transfer and how it was spent. She says she’s asked the company for a statement for six days but has yet to receive a response.

Inmates often rely on deposits from families and friends into their JPay and other accounts. Those deposits also come with fees: In Idaho, a \$20 deposit to an inmate’s account comes with a \$3.50 charge.

Judge credits, faults administration on family reunification

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A federal judge commended the Trump administration for reunifying families in its custody with their children after being separated at the U.S.-Mexico border, while faulting it for leaving hundreds of families still apart and warning that a better system must be in place.

U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw said the government gets “great credit” after reunifying more than 1,800 children 5 and over with parents or sponsors by Thursday’s court-imposed deadline.

He pointed out that many of the families were reunited while in custody then turned his attention to 431 children whose parents have been deported.

“The government is at fault for losing several hundred parents in the process and that’s where we go next,” the judge said.

Sabraw ordered the government and the American Civil Liberties Union, which represents the parents, to submit written updates every Thursday on still-separated families.

The order signaled slightly looser oversight than Sabraw imposed last month with frequent hearings to make sure his deadline was met.

In late June, the judge gave the government 14 days to reunify children under 5 and 30 days to reunite children 5 and older with their families.

Sabraw said the “problem” could not be repeated, describing how Homeland Security, Health and Human Services and Justice departments didn’t

have a system to keep track of the families that were separated when the administration introduced a “zero tolerance” policy toward illegal entry.


“Each (department) was like its own stovepipe, each had its own boss, and they did not communicate,” he said. “What was lost in the process was the family.”

Sabraw didn’t rule immediately on a request by the ACLU to give parents a week to decide whether or not to seek asylum after the group is notified that the family is reunited. As a result, a temporary halt on deportations remained in place.

Earlier Friday, Homeland Security officials said they had reunified all eligible parents with children — but noted many others were not eligible because they had been released from immigration custody, are in their home countries or chose not to be reunited.


More than 1,800 children 5 and older had been reunited with parents or sponsors as of Thursday. That included 1,442 children who were returned to parents who were in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody, and another 378 who were released under a variety of other circumstances.

On a parallel legal front, a federal judge in Los Angeles said Friday that she will appoint an independent monitor to evaluate conditions for immigrant children in U.S. border facilities in Texas following a spate of reports of spoiled food, insufficient water and frigid conditions faced by the youngsters and their parents.



TOYOTA

Get that Summer Break feeling in a new Toyota!



CARS

2018 **Corolla**

0% APR 60 mo.
OR \$2,250 Cash Back

2018 **Camry** Gas or Hybrid

2.9% APR 60 mo.

SUVS

2018 **RAV4** Gas or Hybrid

\$2,500 Cash Back

LEASE A NEW 2018 **Highlander** XLE

\$309 mo. 36 mos.
\$0 Security Deposit \$3,599 Due at Signing

LEASE A NEW 2018 **4RUNNER** SR5

\$349 mo. 36 mos.
\$0 Security Deposit \$3,299 Due at Signing

2018 **TUNDRA** CrewMax Excludes TRD Pro


0.9% APR 60 mo.
OR \$2,000 Cash Back

TRUCKS


LEASE A NEW 2018 **TACOMA** TRD Off-Road Double Cab Excludes TRD Pro

\$299 mo. 36 mos.
\$0 Security Deposit \$2,349 Due at Signing

BuyAToyota.com

Every new Toyota comes with  **Toyota Care** No Cost Service & Roadside

All financing on approved credit through TFS. All vehicles subject to prior sale. All prices plus tax and title. Dealer doc fees vary by dealer. For more details call 1-888-21-TOYOTA. Offers end 7/31/18.

 Inland Northwest Toyota Dealers

PENDLETON

ROUND-UP!

2018

East Oregonian’s Annual Pendleton Round-Up Magazine!

- 12K Copy Distribution
- 4 Major Publications

Don’t miss your opportunity to advertise in the 2018 Pendleton Round-Up Magazine!

With a distribution across Eastern Oregon of 12K issues this is the premier advertising you have been looking for. High gloss, high resolution and highly collectible!

Call your Rep today for more info. Space is limited. Deadline is July 30th.


PUBLISHES:

September 8, 2018
East Oregonian


September 5, 2018
Wallowa County Chieftain
Blue Mountain Eagle
Hermiston Herald

DEADLINE:
July 30, 2018

PENDLETON




Kimberly Macias
541-278-2683
kmacias@eastoregonian.com




Angela Treadwell
541-966-0827
atreadwell@eastoregonian.com


HERMISTON



Jeanne Jewett
541-564-4531
jjewett@hermistonherald.com



Audra Workman
541-564-4538
aworkman@eastoregonian.com

EAST OREGONIAN  **Blue Mountain EAGLE** 