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| Arkansas CURE |
| Arkansas Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants |

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**NEW YEAR…. NEW RATES!**

Thanks to the Federal Communications Commission’s order, lower prison phone rates will be in effect on **MARCH 17, 2016** for all prisons, jails and detention facilities throughout the United States. The new rates will be capped at 11 cents for state and federal prisons, 14 cents for large jails and 22 cents for smaller jails.

**What happens next?**

The prison telephone companies have a limited number of days to challenge the FCC’s rules in court. These corporations have indicated their intent to sue the FCC and could prevent some or all of the rules from taking effect while considering the lawsuit. A number of advocate organizations and a set of impacted family members are prepared to file a motion to intervene in support of the FCC’s order.

“This action will never make up for the inactions of the past, but it is my hope that the order will finally bring relief to those who have waited for so long,” Commissioner Mignon Clyburn, who’s championed the issue over the past several years, commented.

The FCC is now turning its attention to another issue:

 VIDEO VISITS

The commission is accepting public comments on the cost and practices associated with video visits. Correctional facilities across the country have begun adopting video visits as a replacement for face to face contact between families and their incarcerated loved ones. There is some evidence that the cost of video visits is riddled with the same predatory practices that existed with the telephones. Initial comments to the FCC are being requested. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street SW

Washington, DC 20554

Phone: 1-888-225-5322

TTY: 1-888-835-5322

Videophone: 1-844-432-2275

Fax: 1-866-418-0232

Tom Wheeler, Chairman

Tom.Wheeler@fcc.gov



**Bad Policy & Quick Fixes…**

**SMH… (Shaking My Head)**

In 2013, AR. instituted stricter parole policies, the prison population soared, as did the backlog of state prisoners in county jails. Now in Dec. 2015, after irrevocable harm has occurred to individuals, communities and our states limited resources, new regulations go into effect to reduce the number of parolees sent back to prison. A hearing for a parolee will not be held *until there has been a conviction or a finding that a parole violation has occurred, except in cases involving allegations of violence.* Officials admit the 2013 regulations caused the number of parolees who were returned to prison to skyrocket.

**Private-4-Profit Prison Use ‘Creeps’ Up**

In 2014, AR-CURE opposed Shipping Arkansas imprisoned citizens to the out-of-state Private-4-Profit Prison in Bowie TX. ‘Shipping Arkansas citizens across state lines as a 'quick-fix' to prison overcrowding is an abhorrent practice of treating people like commodities and our state's dangerous reliance on incarceration.’ Proponents of the plan characterized it as a ‘*temporary’* arrangement in 2014 yet the original contracted number of 288 now stands at 335 in 2016… **all of which *was to originally expire Dec. 31, 2015.***



### Increased Tracking of Arkansas Citizens in Prison…Online.

Arkansas CURE

“An effort to provide information on criminal justice reform through education and advocacy”

Arkansas CURE has been around for quite some time…since 1996 to be exact. Since that time, the chapter has been a viable advocate for positive change in prison and criminal justice reform here in Arkansas.

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CURE… is an all-volunteer membership organization.

No salary, No big office…

Just commitment & passion.

Working hard to provide our members with the information and tools necessary to help them understand the criminal justice system and to advocate for positive change.

If you like this newsletter, do share. If you’re interested in joining Arkansas CURE, please write us for more information today!

### To Grow… or Not to Grow…

###  …that has been the question.

The Arkansas Department of Correction’s website has been an online presence for years whereby information could be viewed by the public. The Public Safety and Accountability Act of 2015 increased the amount of information published online for public viewing. Prior to this Act the Current Prison Sentence History, Prior Prison Sentence History and Detainers were made available along with a photo and identifying description.

**The Upside:** According to Senator Sanders the Acts primary sponsor, “It’s heartening to know that those people that have been affected by crime and by people who have done very bad things to them have the ability to now watch and monitor:. One such person affected by a crime committed against them noted that, ‘now a clear picture of what their perpetrator has been up to behind bars will be known and they will be able to know the kind of person that’s getting out of prison.’

**Use With Caution:** The additional information includes Major Guilty Disciplinary Violations, Risk Score/Level, Court Orders (Order of Protection, No Contact Order), Program Achievements, Probation/SIS; Prior Probation/SIS History. Even though a ‘Disclaimer’ is attached and required to be read and accepted before being able to view the information, it clearly states that the online information may not be accurate or complete.

A word of caution is in order when using the selected ‘bits’ of information…it will not allow judgment relative to “the kinds of person” being released or can it be expected to show a ‘complete listing’ of programs a person may have attended successfully. Just what this Act actually accomplishes without assurances of accuracy and completeness is questionable, to say the least.

All complaints regarding the accuracy of information on this website returned by this search should be submitted, in writing, to the Public Information Officer at PO BOX 8707, Pine Bluff, AR 71611.

 **Inmates OK to grow hair without religious reasons** was the headline this month in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette after the Board of Corrections voted 4-to-2 to pass an administrative directive following litigation and a January 2015 ruling against the Arkansas Department of Correction by the United States Supreme Court. Arkansas prisoners can now grow facial hair of any length – without having to prove their religion dictates the fashion.

Freedom to practice the traditions of one’s faith is very important to us all; the ability to maintain a safe environment for everyone in a correctional facility is very important to us all, as well. This being recognized and said…has produced opinions beyond the recently enacted administrative directive. Even though, one cannot believe everything in print... it is disconcerting to have a Board of Correction official describe approval of the administrative directive as, “It’s gotten to where the inmates are running the prison. They can have a beard down to their knees and hair down to the back of their knees,” Glover said after the meeting. “I just feel the inmates have taken over. I’m not afraid of lawsuits. Let them bring them.”

However, cooler heads prevailed and adherence to the US Supreme Court ruling was supported and recommended by ADC Director Wendy Kelley, chaplains and staff. The Director asked the board to give the prisoners the “benefit of the doubt,” saying most would likely not take advantage of the policy. After a yearlong attempt to limit the length of hair, about 5,600 applications for religious accommodations and more than 600 grievances & litigation filed related to the policy. The impasse between the legal ruling and correction policy is now broken. The numbers simply overwhelmed prison administrators and chaplains who had to process the applications and decided if the stated religious beliefs were sincere. If only such energy, angst, time, money and passion could be devoted to policies that encourage betterment of self, education, training and family unification would routinely be promoted by the Board of Correction, prison admin and those incarcerated… just sayin’

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| RESOURCES FOR YOU |

**Inmate Services**

Freebird Publishers

BOX 541

North Dighton, MA 02764

From their website:

Freebird Publishers is based in Massachusetts and services the entire USA. We provide inmate services, prison publications, and education for inmates, prisoner services and products for the incarcerated. We also offer self-publishing services to inmates and their loved ones. We carry a line of Silpada sterling silver jewelry, gift baskets, flowers and chocolates.

**AR-CURE 2015: Used This Year To Strengthen Old Alliances and Build New Ones…**

Criminal justice reform education and advocacy requires constant vigilance and persistence ensuring a never ending ‘To Do List’, often experiencing 2 steps forward, 1 step back or vice versa. 2015 was both promising and discouraging, sometimes taking place at the same time.

This past year brought the most attention given to the Arkansas criminal justice system and nation-wide that has not been seen for decades. With this added attention, some good, some bad and some ugly occurred. Since ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder’, you rate some of our State’s actions:

The new Governor and Legislature took prison reform in a different direction taking the previously proposed new $100 million, 1000 bed prison off-the-table. The price tag for the 2015 new plan was $64 million with about $32 million being spent in the next two years.

To relieve prison overcrowding the Correction Department was authorized to contract with counties, the federal government and other states to house Arkansas inmates. [**Beware of**: shipping people out-of-state to private-4-profit facilities and opening the door for contractual agreements with Regional Units ‘guaranteeing a stable prisoner census’ for years in advance]

The expansion of specialty courts, such as drug courts. [**Beware of**: underfunded or non-existent statewide access for all Arkansas citizens]

A "pay for success" program authorizing the Department of Community Correction to contract with private organizations. The private organization would receive financial bonuses if they lower recidivism rates of inmates under their care. [**Beware of**: not holding the State DOC to the same criteria, lower recidivism = increase funds model; over use of private companies for profit]

Created a Legislative Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force to study outcomes of the state’s new efforts. [**Beware of**: No previously incarcerated individual or advocate group member was appointed to this Task Force]

Throughout an active 2015 AR-CURE has voiced, written and worked to inform by any number of ways a CURE ‘**Beware’** to proposed or enacted criminal justice reform. AR-CURE has been active throughout, sometimes taking the lead, at times working with, flat out against or flat in favor of a criminal justice issue.

Freebird Publishers can professionally handle all of your publishing needs. We can assist you in every step of publishing your words into a printed or eBooks. We offer our self-publishing services to all incarcerated prisoners and inmates in the USA. We have a dedicated marketing and talented graphic design department to assist you in promoting your books.

Freebird Publishers offers prison publications like Inmate Shopper, resource books, guides, newsletters, collectible artwork photos, greeting cards, and other niche items created for and by incarcerated individuals. Our goals are to help prisoners allowing them to better ready themselves and their families upon release and become a stronger person getting ready for reentry. We work with all inmates within all the levels Federal BOP, state prisons and county jails in the country.

We provide 3 of the 4 national prisoner publications in America. Inmate Shopper, Resources for Inmate Services, The Best 500 Non Profit Organizations for Prisoners and Their Families, a prisoner resource book.
A Year of Corcoran Sun, a year in a book of a prison yard monthly newsletter. We offer education for inmates with our certified courses, Banking & Financial Management Course and Personal Reentry Guide and Journal Course. **Please send 4 stamps for a complete information packet.**



The 8th Annual InterNational Prisoners Family Conference is coming up May 4-6 in Dallas, TX. This conference provides critical connections, information and resources for families & organizations serving the prisoner and their family. Information on the web:

[www.prisonersfamilyconference.org](http://www.prisonersfamilyconference.org).



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**MOVING FORWARD…**

The ABC’s of

Arkansas CURE

**A**lternatives to imprisonment

**B**an the Box

**C**riminal Justice Reform

**D**o Away with the Death Penalty

**E**nd Registries

**F**amily Education and Integration

**G**ood time credit

**H**uman Rights

**I**nformation and Education

**J**ob Training and Skill Development

**K**now Your Rights

**L**egislative Reforms

**M**edical and Mental Health

Diagnosis and Treatment

**N**ewsletter

**O**versight for improvement

within the system

**P**ublic Perception

**Q**uality Rehabilitation Programs

**R**estorative Justice

**S**top the use of Solitary Confinement

**T**elephone Cost Fairness

**U**nite Community Resources

**V**oting Rights

**W**ell-being of the elderly

e**X**amine and Duplicate

 Successful Programs

**Y**outh Private Prison Elimination

**Z**ero Life and Life without Parole Sentencing

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**Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson talks of 2016.**

In a KUAR Radio Address early January, Governor Hutchinson spoke of several key issues for the New Year.

“As we head into 2016, topics such as health care, highway funding and criminal justice reform will take center stage. These are critical issues, but nothing is too big for our state” the Governor said. Hutchinson also makes mention of “making great strides in prison reform by giving non-violent offenders a second chance.” In an earlier Arkansas News online article from November, Hutchinson is quoted as saying that sentencing is “out of whack” in Arkansas. A legislative task force has been created to look into ways to reduce the prison overcrowding in Arkansas.

What strides and changes will be made are not clear… but…at least we have word that it is a “key issue” for the coming year. We can only hope the New Year will move Arkansas in a forward and more positive direction when it comes to any kind of prison, sentencing and/or criminal justice reform.

**WELCOME!** AR-CURE looks forward to working with The ***Criminal Justice Reform Clinic*** a non-profit 501(c)(3) Charitable Organization *Established in 2015.* It plans to fill holes in the criminal justice system, offering a hands-on experience with criminal law, engage elected officials and the general public with information and training designed to enhance effective criminal justice public policy. **CJRC** plans include: *The Executive Clemency Program* offering a unique opportunity through this challenging form of advocacy, *The Criminal Justice Program* with Project ‘Second Look’ to correct acts of injustice within the criminal justice system, Project ‘Amicus’ envisions eliminating systemic discrimination in the administration of justice and *The Quality Of Life Program*will serve as a conduit for the criminal justice system to work for all of us. The ultimate aim is to combat the discrimination faced by people with conviction histories. For this reason a number of activities will be undertaken to improve communities affected by mass incarceration. Initial Contact: criminaljusticereformclinic@yahoo.com



 JOIN ARKANSAS CURE!

Want to stay informed about what’s going on in Arkansas? Join today!

Please provide the following information:

Name/#, Address, City, State, Zip

Annual Dues

Indigent Incarcerated Citizens: Fee waived.

Incarcerated Citizens: $3.00 (stamps/stamped envelopes accepted)

Individual/Family: $12.00

Individual Benefactor: No limit or set fee on donation amount.

Supporting Organization: No limit or set fee on donation amount.



Arkansas CURE

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Conway, AR 72034

501-519-0064

FAX: 501-470-9039

rehab4justice@yahoo.com

Find us on the Web: [www.arkansascure.org](http://www.arkansascure.org)

Join Arkansas CURE on Facebook

 THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!