

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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## The 10 National Demands

1. **Immediate improvements to the conditions** of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned persons.
2. **An immediate end to prison slavery.** All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor.
3. **The *Prison Litigation Reform Act* must be rescinded,** allowing imprisoned persons a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights. 42 U.S.C. sec. 1997(e)
4. The ***Truth in Sentencing Act* and the *Sentencing Reform Act* must be rescinded** so that imprisoned persons have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No person shall be sentenced to Death by Incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole.  
TIS:<http://bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/tssp.pdf> &  
SRA:<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1197/text>
5. **An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing, and parole denials of Black and brown persons.** Black persons shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in southern states.
6. **An immediate end to racist gang enhancement laws** targeting Black and brown persons.
7. **No imprisoned person shall be denied access to rehabilitation programs** at their place of detention because of their label as a "violent offender."
8. State prisons must be funded specifically to **offer more rehabilitation services.**
9. ***Pell grants* (for college tuition) must be reinstated** in all U.S. states and territories. <https://wapo.st/2rT1pwo>
10. **The voting rights of all confined citizens** serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees, and so-called "ex-felons" **must be counted.** Representation is demanded.

All voices count!

## THE POWER OF THE STATE

A private company now controls the correspondence to a whole state's prisoners. The first of how many?!

The Florida company that will be controlling all Pennsylvania prisoners--non-legal--mail introduces itself thus:

"Smart Communications is a family owned business headquartered in Seminole FL (near St. Petersburg). Since its inception in 2009, we have had a reputation as the true innovator in the corrections marketplace.

"We were years ahead when in 2009 we implemented the first ever inmate email system used in a county jail.

"You will be partnering with a company that is solely focused on providing our clients with state-of-the-art communication solutions. Our solutions are unique in that they will work on the hardware platform of your choice, Kiosks or Tablets.

"In 2016, our innovation continued when Smart Communications changed the corrections landscape forever by introducing our exclusive, Patent Pending, MailGuard Postal Mail Elimination System.

"We continue to innovate in 2017 with the Patent Pending Smart Visit--bringing mobile tablet video visitation technology to the marketplace."

Postal address: *Smart Communications*  
10491 72nd Street, Seminole FL 33777,  
888-253-5178, [info@smarkioskcompany.com](mailto:info@smarkioskcompany.com)  
All non-legal mail for Pennsylvania prisoners should now be sent to:  
Smart Communications/PA DOC, SCI \_\_\_\_\_,  
Prisoner Name, Prisoner Number, PO Box  
33028, St Petersburg FL 33733.

MAILINGS FROM THE C.P.R. TO THOSE IMPRISONED IN PENNSYLVANIA WILL BE EXTREMELY LIMITED UNTIL WE ARE ASSURED THAT PEOPLE THERE ARE RECEIVING OUR MAILINGS. LET US HEAR FROM YOU.

Resource: Abolitionist Law Center (ALC), PO Box 8654, Pittsburgh PA 15221. The ALC litigates on behalf of people whose human rights have been violated in prison, produces educational programs to inform the general public about the evils of mass incarceration, and works to develop a mass movement against the U.S. penal system.

Por los colgados y golpeados.  
Por los baleados, ahogados y quemados.  
Por los torturados, atormentados y aterrorizados.  
Por los aquellos abandonados por los mandatos de la ley.  
Nosotros los recordaremos.

### What is a "strong economy"?

About 40% of U.S. families struggled to meet at least one of their basic needs last year, including paying for food, health care, housing or utilities. And having a job doesn't ensure families will be able to meet their basic needs. Among the households with at least one working adult, more than 30% reported hardship. Food insecurity was the most common challenge. More than 23% of households struggled to feed their family at some point during the year. About 18% reported problems paying a family medical bill--and a similar percentage didn't seek care for a medical need because of the cost. Roughly 13% of families missed a utility bill payment at some point during the year. And 10% of families either didn't pay the full amount of their rent or mortgage, or they paid it late.

The survey by the Urban Institute on which this information was based comes at a time when lawmakers are considering cuts to safety-net programs such as Medicaid, food stamps and housing assistance....

In addition, according to a *Washington Post* newspaper analysis, more than 7 million people nationwide may have had their driver's licenses suspended for failure to pay court or administrative debt --also known as "penalizing poverty." Many localities have designed systems that squeeze revenue from desperate people. Relatively small initial fines turn into massive debts and stints in jail.

The states of Hawaii, Kansas, Vermont and Virginia each have suspended drivers' licenses of more than 9% of the adult population for debt or associated issues.

### Some Prison Population Reduction

In the last 10 years, five states have reduced their prison populations by 14 to 25%. In Connecticut, it has gone down 25%. In Michigan, by 20%; in Mississippi, by 17 1/2%; in Rhode Island by 23%; and in South Carolina, by 14%. A variety of techniques have been used: less juvenile incarceration increased parole, more good time, and less recidivism through increasing programming.

However, the prison populations in eight states continue to increase. And in 20 additional states, declines have been less than 5%.

Con esperanza, porque la desesperanza es el enemigo de la justicia.

Con coraje porque la paz requiere de valentia.

Con persistencia porque la justicia es una constante lucha

Con fe porque nosotros podemos vencer.

--por *Justicia Igualitaria*, Montgomery AL

### MONEY BAIL: A PREDATORY SYSTEM

Both California and New Mexico are among the states that are inching toward changing their money bail systems. In New Mexico, the bail bond industry has been fighting the changes tooth and nail and has had some success.

California has more recently passed a new law that at least 70 community-based organizations in California have opposed. Certainly the system as it has been has targeted poor people, Black people and other people of color, immigrants, homeless people and people with mental health needs.

But now, money bail has been replaced with an equally harmful and perhaps even more oppressive system of "preventive detention" and profiling. Critics of the new system consider that it will hand judges unrestrained power to incarcerate a person pre-trial with no bail set and no possibility of release. Thus it give courts and law enforcement power to put *more* people in jail.

The new law gives judges wide latitude to decide what to do with many accused based on their assessment of their likelihood of returning to court and of the danger they are thought to pose to the public.

Each county's superior court will now set its own procedures for deciding who is to be released before trial. This seems highly likely to create a patchwork system based on where a detainee lives. Theoretically, those accused of nonviolent felonies will be released within 12 hours of booking, while those charged with violent felonies will remain jailed until their trial or their plea is accepted.

### Spirituality and Abolition

*Abolition: A Journal of Insurgent Politics* (1321 N. Milwaukee Avenue. PMB 460, Chicago IL 60622) is issuing a Call for Submissions for its Spirituality and Abolition issue.

Abolition is a spiritual practice, a spiritual journey, a spiritual commitment. This issue will explore how we can get there as a collective project. The claim is that the material conditions that will produce abolition are contrary to dominant Western philosophical and theological thought to date.