

COMPASSIONATE RELEASE LEGISLATION  
LONG OVERDUE IN MASSACHUSETTS

by Timothy J. Muise



Picture 92 year old Nick Montos leaning on his cane, out of breath, in the quad at MCI Norfolk, the state's largest prison. Nick is making one of his three trips a day across the prison complex to get his life sustaining medications and is forced to ask another prisoner to dig his nitroglycerin out of his pocket so he can address the heart episode he is experiencing.

Now picture Frank Soffen, 70 years old, in his wheelchair unable to hold an ink pen to write his son to tell him about an argument he had with a guard in the assisted care facility at MCI Norfolk who would not allow him to be wheeled over to a church service.

The two men I have asked you to picture had a lot of similarities, both were seriously ill prisoners who no longer present a threat to the safety of the public. The one big difference is that Nick died before he could be released under some sort of compassionate vehicle, but Frank is alive and fighting as best he can to succeed at what poor Nick could not.

Massachusetts is one of only ten states that do not have some type of compassionate/medical release law that allows seriously ill prisoners to be released to more appropriate care. The cost to care for our aging prisoners is in a range from \$75,000.00 to \$115,000.00 per prisoner per year, as opposed to about \$44,000.00 for a healthy man or woman. Not only is this type of legislation the moral and merciful thing to do, in these tough economic times it is the only fiscally responsible choice for addressing the problem of our aging prison population. These men are the safest release demographic and the managed care they can receive outside of prison walls is a fraction of the cost of the high-end fees applied to correctional setting care.

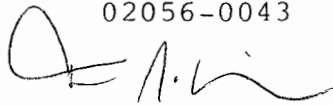
The social fiber of our society is sadly diminished by the needless demise of men like Nick Montos. The suffering Frank Soffen must endure behind bars should be repugnant to any caring community. Our elderly and infirm prisoners deserve dignity. The hard working men and women of the Commonwealth deserve to have their tax dollars more frugally spent. Compassionate release legislation is a win-win situation whose time has come.

The push for compassionate release has begun here in the state

of Massachusetts. The Lifers' Group, Inc., at MCI Norfolk is working with The End The Odds Coalition and The Criminal Justice Policy Coalition to compel state lawmakers to make this much needed vehicle law. They need the support of the citizens of the Commonwealth to ensure that men like Frank Soffen don't have to suffer the same fate as Nick Montos. Please contact them at the following: [friends.of\\_lifers@yahoo.com](mailto:friends.of_lifers@yahoo.com), [ahmadifar@comcast.net](mailto:ahmadifar@comcast.net), and [info@cjpc.org](mailto:info@cjpc.org). You can also contact your local Senator or State Representative directly and let them know you think that compassionate release legislation is long overdue in Massachusetts.

Authored by

Timothy J. Muise  
Long-Termers Representative  
Lifers' Group, Inc.  
MCI Norfolk  
P.O. Box 43  
Norfolk, MA  
02056-0043



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