

# LT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Over the last month my office has been contacted by many Vermonters with a range of opinions about our out-of-state prison population. The majority have been asking to review the decision to send our prisoners to Mississippi; a few have also expressed, "Why care about those who are incarcerated?"

Incarceration is very complicated, and this cannot simply be reversed. Our prison system is in place to keep our communities safer, but it is not always fair or just. We are not exempt from racial inequality; Vermont has the second highest rate of incarceration of people of color in the USA. There are innocent people who are locked up. We have a large number of inmates, particularly female inmates, who come into the system due to addiction, abuse, and lack of access to mental health services. Most of the people who are in prison are there because the system broke down and failed them earlier in their lives.

I believe we need to remind ourselves the Department of Corrections is housed in the Agency of Human Services because we, in Vermont, have a goal of restitution, rehabilitation and reduced recidivism. The decision to contract with an out-of-state for-profit business, CoreCivic, Inc. (the largest private prison company in the US with a 2018 second-quarter profit \$42 million), to send over 200 Vermonters to Mississippi does not match our goals. These are people who will be thousands of miles away from their families and disconnected from their support systems. The goal of CoreCivic is to make money, not to rehabilitate prisoners, provide medical access, or prepare them to contribute to their state/family/community when released. Finally, recent news reports have shown a disturbing lack of oversight and accountability for our out-of-state prisoners. We can and must do better. (On October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6PM there will be a rally "*Vermonters Against Private Prisons*" on the State House Lawn.)

During the last legislative session great work was done to examine addiction and incarceration. Rep. Selene Colburn, a member of the House Judiciary Committee, was a strong advocate of S.166, a bill to ensure those who are addicted can receive medication when they are incarcerated. This bill passed and was signed into law. Unfortunately, it appears the intent of the law is not being followed. Read more about this and what it is like to detox during incarceration on the back.

I urge each of you to take the time to ask questions of yourself, elected officials and the media. Think about the big picture and what you want for Vermont, your communities, and future. Examine the implicit biases you may

(Over)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### September 27

1:00 - Manufactured in VT Trade Show. Champlain Valley Exposition, Essex  
6:30 - Lt. Governor Movie: *Tough Guise 2*. United Community Church, 1325 Main St., St. Johnsbury

### September 29 9:00AM

Underhill Harvest Festival and Parade

### September 30 1:00PM

ARC 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Elks Club, 44 Pleasant St., Rutland

### October 2 6:00PM

"*Vermonters Against Private Prisons*" Rally, State House Lawn, Montpelier

### October 3 4:00PM

Vermont Humanities Reception. 11 Loomis St., Montpelier

### October 4

7:00 - Live with Charlie & Ernie on WVMT 620AM  
5:30 - Spectrum Empty Bowl Dinner. UVM, Davis Center, Burlington

### October 8

Indigenous People's Day

### October 9 1:00PM

SPRAWL Talk Radio. WMRW 95.1FM

For a complete list of events please visit the calendar on our website: [www.LTGov.vermont.gov](http://www.LTGov.vermont.gov)

hold and how those impact the lives of everyone you interact with. Each person is an individual who makes a positive impact on our community, when we stereotype we reduce the opportunity for community progress.

Thanks for staying connected.



## MEDICATION-ASSISTED TREATMENT IN PRISION

*By Representative Selene Colburn, Burlington*

S.166/Act 176 says that inmates who are being treated with medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder can continue as long as needed. Prior to this, Corrections would boot people off their prescriptions after a set number of days. The bill also says that people will be screened for opioid use disorder and offered MAT if they need and want it. Unfortunately, the new law isn't working. Despite over 500 requests, inmates are being told they will have to wait until just before release for MAT access. Many who have begged for help are still being released into the community untreated. Numerous studies have shown that former inmates are at significantly higher risk for fatal overdoses. This is precisely the issue that S.166 was designed to address. In fact, when MAT access was instituted in Rhode Island's corrections system, fatal overdoses went down, both for former inmates and for the state as a whole. The Dept. of Corrections is aware of the legislature's intent and helped amend the bill to include the language about "medical necessity" they are now using to justify denying treatment access. Yet, they are passing their policies off as an uncontrollable decision of their medical provider – the same medical provider that was recently revealed to have pocketed over two million dollars of state money, while leaving inmates untreated for Hepatitis C. As Soros Justice Fellow and addiction expert Maia Szalavitz observed, "Sounds like the privatized medical service is trying to make money by denying meds and using resistance within the system to justify it." At this point, I'm hard pressed to disagree. I will continue to introduce legislation and rally my colleagues until treatment is delivered in a timely and humane fashion. Those of us who care are not going away.

## DETOXING DURING INCARCERATION

*By: Liz McDougal, Lt. Governor Intern*

I have had the misfortune of being caught in the web of this country's broken judicial system and, while there are many, many things that need to be repaired right now, I am speaking on detoxing while incarcerated. My charges were always a direct result of my opiate addiction so every single time I was locked up the beginning of that stay was spent detoxing. There is nothing more miserable than detoxing while locked up, it's the most physically uncomfortable, dehumanizing, anxiety inducing experience I can say I've ever had. These were missed opportunities to help put me on a different path. I'm not claiming to be a victim here, I committed crimes – addict or not – that I shouldn't have and I'm not saying it was wrong to put me away for said crimes. However, I do believe it is wrong to throw addicts in jail and leave them to suffer and on top of it offer no rehabilitation. Most who have substance use disorder are dual diagnosis (meaning they have another mental illness also) and to be going through withdrawal – especially while being incarcerated and all the stress that comes with that – surely exacerbates their symptoms. It is nothing short of inhumane and it almost guarantees a return to the same lifestyle and thus eventually incarceration again, or worse – death.