

WRFR FM COMMUNITY RADIO

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March 24, 2011

Arthur Daniel Belanger #132039
Florida State Prison - Main Unit
7819 N.W. 228th Street
Raiford, Florida 32026

Dear Mr. Belanger

You parents and I and a legislator met with new Maine DOC Commissioner Joseph Ponte on Wednesday March 23rd.

Several important things came out of it:

- Ponte is willing to develop a written interstate compact “return policy”. It is due to the lack of one in Maine’s DOC that the bill LD 690 was written. If he comes up with a good solid policy, we may accept that instead of the wording of the bill, in case DOC will fight pretty hard against the bill as written. To make sure that they come up with a decent policy, we (M-PAC) are going to be involved in making sure the policy that gets developed makes sense. Ponte seems to think it would be straightforward, based on “good behavior” reports from the out of state prison. Therefore I ask for your ideas of what should be in such a policy? Can the state that interstate compacted prisoners are held in be trusted to give honest reports to Maine? What are the details that aren’t apparent to us from outside the walls that make a difference, so that it gets added as safeguards into the Maine state prison policy on interstate compact returns?
- Ponte deflected our attempted delivery of your and another prisoner’s letters authorizing me and M-PAC to review your records. He said that because of the significance of this public access to Department of Corrections files, **he wants the letters sent him again, but this time with your signatures notarized**. Ponte said every prison has more than one notary public available to prisoners as a free service, and that this would not be a burden. No cost. This notarizing supposedly removing any possible question as to the actual source of the letters. Even though it’s a hassle, could you please do that? I enclose a copy of your authorizing letter. Just rewrite it, get it stamped by the notary and ship it out again.

- Your parents did an excellent job communicating to the commissioner why this no-return-date policy has to end. Its not an abstraction; its about people suffering from a dumb policy, and yet slogging on, refusing to give up on their son. They, and you, are going to be featured in an upcoming edition of the Bangor Daily News about this issue. (The story got bumped this weekend by stories about a government airplane accident and a huge demonstration against governor Lepage over his anti-labor plans. So it goes.
- Commissioner Ponte came across as very much opposed to any organized civil protests by prisoners . Seemed to see such as deserving shipping-out. Something we shall try to straighten him out about. In Maine unlike most states, prisoners can vote, can do many political things. Have more rights than other states.

I am terribly sorry about the surprise with your letter of authorization, and the need to get a new one sent with a notary stamp. Please do this if you can, and send it to me at the same address: WRFR Community Radio, 20 Gay Street, Rockland ME 04841. Also your thoughts on what to include and what NOT to include in an interstate compact return policy.

Sincerely

Ron Huber, producer
WRFR Community Radio

Member of M-PAC