

# STATEVILLE SPEAKS

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE • FALL/WINTER 2014

## CORRECTING CORRECTIONS



SEE CORRECTIONS PAGE 2

*Hope...Redemption...Change*

## CORRECTIONS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

live, all sharing a dozen showers. The roof still leaks; the windows still need to be replaced. There is mold growing in the bathrooms; and raw sewage drips through the corroded pipes serving the third floor, directly into the bathrooms on the second floor.<sup>2</sup>

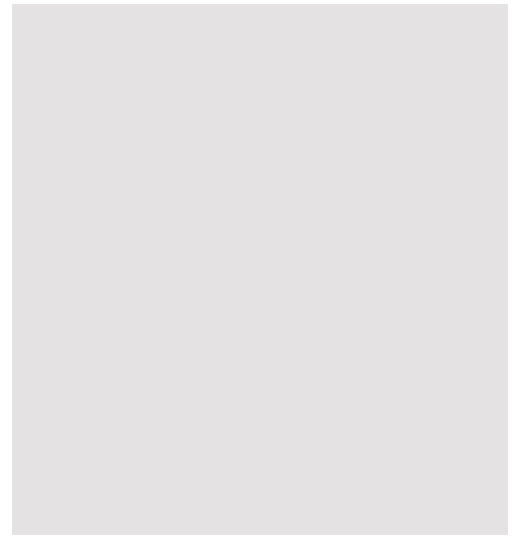
At Vandalia Correctional Center, men are living in basements, never designed for human habitation. Worse, these basements food—raw sewage comes up through the floor drains after a hard rain. Men keep plastic baggies in their beds to put on in the morning, to avoid wading through sewage.

Logan Correctional Center—Illinois' main prison for women—had as many as 300 women living in the gym last year.

At the Reception Center at Stateville, earlier this year they could not use their infirmary for in-patients, because people were sleeping on the floor.

At Pinckneyville Correctional Center, the Department

# FROM THE EDITOR



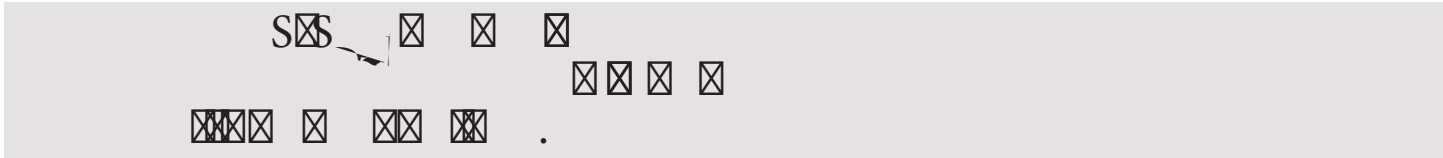
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by the federal government and most states. Instead, the Department of Corrections has defined “capacity” to include anywhere they have a bed. So if there is one empty bed on the floor of the infirmary, we are under capacity. That definition is buried in a footnote to a footnote on the Department’s website. Each prison on the website reports that it is under capacity, with a footnote: “As of 5/31/2013. Reflects bed space capacity analysis as outlined in the July 1, 2013 Quarterly Report to the Legislature.” If you go to that Quarterly Report ([http://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/reportsandstatistics/Documents/IDOC\\_Quarterly%20Report\\_Jul\\_%202013.pdf](http://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/reportsandstatistics/Documents/IDOC_Quarterly%20Report_Jul_%202013.pdf)) Footnote 1 to Table 4 in that report reads: “Operational Capacity/Bed space is the maximum number of inmates a facility can hold.”

Under this definition, as long as

By: Robert West

I welcome your visit once again. I love to see you suffer mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. I want to make you restless so you can never relax. I want you jumpy, nervous and anxious. I want to make you agitated and irritable so everything and everybody makes you uncomfortable. I want you to be confused and depressed, so you can't think clearly



By Joseph R. Dole

Illinois currently finds itself in a dire fiscal state. A main cause of this has been years of passing laws without any consideration of the resulting financial costs. An egregious example of this is the Truth-In-Sentencing (TIS) law. TIS require that nearly all violent offenders serve 85% to 100% of their sentences. Prior to enactment in 1998, offenders served on average 44% of their sentences.

For more than a decade, Illinois resisted enacting a TIS law while other states rushed to do so. Instead we increased sentencing ranges for violent crimes. The State didn't pass its TIS law until the federal government began offering monetary incentives to the states to do so. Although enacted in Illinois over 16 years ago, not a single comprehensive cost/benefit analysis has been undertaken to determine what monetary effect enactment has had on the state.

Other states that enacted TIS legislation adjusted for it by reducing sentences so the average imposed was about half the length before enactment. That way a prisoner ended up serving the same amount of time in prison and didn't cost the state additional money. Illinois on the other hand, failed to adjust. Instead judges here actu-

ally increased average sentences imposed or kept handing out similar sentences. With the sentencing ranges having already been increased, taxpayers are being hit twice as hard.

A couple of years ago, I compiled a preliminary report and found that even if one considers the meager funds received from the federal government from 1996-2004 (125 million), the additional costs incurred by the state for sentences imposed under TIS for 2002-2004 alone will be over \$750 million. My estimates were extremely conservative. I used a roughly \$25,000 per year per inmate cost of incarceration figure. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, the true cost is actually \$38,268.

Prior to TIS passage in Illinois, if a person received a 50-year sentence for murder at age 18, he or she would have had to serve around 44% of that sentence, or 22 years. Thus, the State would incur a cost of around \$841,896. After passage of TIS though, that same sentence means the offender must now serve the entire 50 years and won't be released until they are 68. Therefore, the first 32 years will cost the State \$1,224,576 and the last 18 years, when he or she is elderly, with increased healthcare needs, will cost

the State an additional \$242,000 (the IDOC considers prisoners elderly at age 50, and the CDC reports that elderly inmates cost \$69,000 per year). So before TIS, a 50-year murder sentence cost taxpayers \$841,896, but after TIS, that cost rose to \$2,466,576 (not counting investigation, prosecution and appeal costs). Thus, TIS nearly tripled the cost to taxpayers, adding \$1,624,680 to the tab for each murder sentence. Each year over 300 people in Illinois are sentenced for murder. Thousands more are sentenced for other violent crimes. All of these TIS sentences add up to the State incurring well over a quarter of a billion dollars per year in added liabilities. It is time to use some "common cents" in our criminal justice policies.

\* The report, "Preliminary Findings Concerning the Financial Costs of Implementing Illinois' Truth-In-Sentencing Laws (2002-2004)" January 11, 2011, can be downloaded at [www.realcostofprisons.org](http://www.realcostofprisons.org).

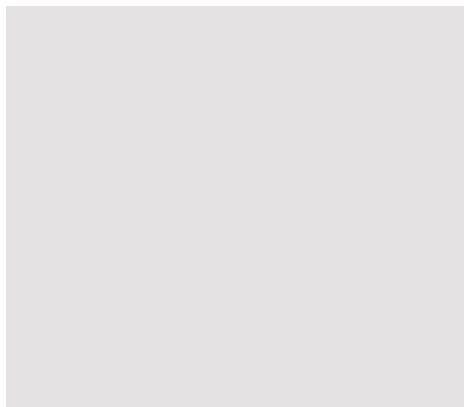
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## DEAR READERS

# SWEET LITTLE LIES

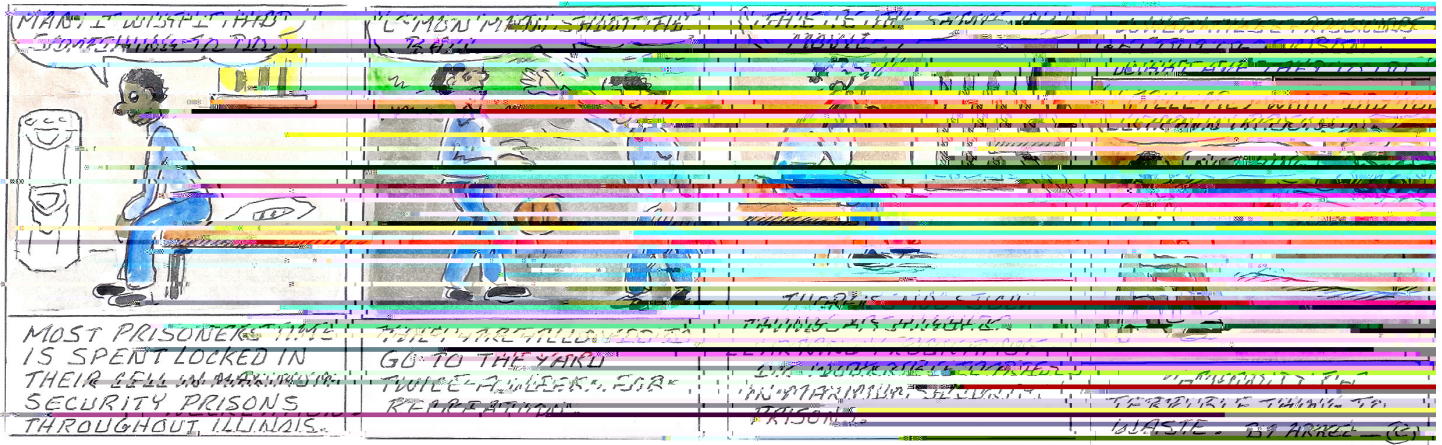
By Ron Janssen

As a young teenager, I didn't see what the big deal was about lying. Everyone does it right? "Oh your new haircut isn't so bad", "Those jeans don't make your butt look fat", "It's not a big deal that you forgot my birthday", "No one is ever going to remember your embarrassing incident". Those are just a few of the many countless lies we tell or hear every-day.



# POLITICAL 'TOON

BY ARKEE



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