

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN  
RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

MARCH 25, 1977

The meeting was called to order at 9:37 A.M. in Room 323 on Friday, March 25, 1977, with Senator Jack Schofield in the Chair.

PRESENT: Chairman Jack Schofield  
Vice-Chairman Joe Neal  
Senator William Raggio  
Senator Richard Blakemore  
Senator Wilbur Faiss  
Senator Willaim Hernstadt

GUESTS: Virginia Geer, Private citizen  
Ruth Murray, Private citizen  
Jean Mager, Private citizen  
Sandra Asire, Private citizen  
Betty Anderson, Private citizen  
Pamela Ildefonso, Private citizen  
Karol Garcia, Private citizen  
Lisa Andrews, Private citizen  
Lori Trieste, Private citizen  
Audrey Ryan, Private citizen  
Carmen Dugan, Private citizen  
Anita Clark, Private citizen

S.B. 239

Virginia Geer: Mrs. Geer testified that she is the wife of an inmate, they have three children, and will have been married 22 years in July. The ages of her children are 13, 17 and 19.

Mrs. Geer said that she and her husband cannot have private visits in the visiting room at the prison, and even these are only possible every two or three months, as she is a Las Vegas resident.

Senator Hernstadt asked what was her husband's offense? Mrs. Geer said murder and attempted murder. Senator Hernstadt asked if Mrs. Geer or any of the other wives were aware of any foundations that may finance the costs of conjugal visits? Mrs. Geer said that she thought the Inmate Welfare Fund has about \$16,000 for this project.

Mrs. Geer commented that not only is the prisoner punished, but also his family. Senator Faiss asked if her husband thought that this might help his standing with Prison administration? Mrs. Geer said possibly, and her husband has a perfect record.

Senator Schofield asked Mrs. Geer who she worked for? She answered, Paul Larson, an attorney in Las Vegas.

Ruth Murray: Mrs. Murray said she was an inmate wife, and employed as a legal secretary in Reno.

Mrs. Murray said her husband is a humanitarian transer from California. And said that the Folsom prison in California has a program for conjugal visitation and it works.

Mrs. Murray said that she thought that the Jaycees may also help with the financing for the visits.

Mrs. Murray said this would affect all family relationships, such as her mother-in-law wishing to visit her son, not just the husband and wife.

Mrs. Murray said that her husband has been in prison for four years with no write-ups. She said that they do not have any children and she has no desire to become pregnant while he is in prison. Also, she added that she would like to refute the statement she heard that conjugal visits can be made during regular visiting room hours, she said that is just not possible.

Senator Raggio commented that he would like to hear testimony regarding whether the funds suggested for this legislation could be put to better use, if directed towards education.

Mrs. Murray said that this bill is for all prisoners, as if a man is single, his mother and father can visit him. She also said that in regards to the financing, she knows no better investment than human beings.

Jean Mager: Mrs. Mager works for the State as a secretary, and her husband is an inmate at Medium. They have two boys, 8 and 10 years of age.

Mrs. Mager said her 10 year old boy is hyper-active, and these visits with his father would help in disciplining the child.

Mrs. Mager said that this is done in other states (Oregon, California and Mississippi) and she thinks it would be great for the entire family.

Senator Hernstadt asked what was her husband's offense? She answered, armed robbery.

Sandra Asire: Ms. Asire said that her fiancee was in Maximum, and although she understood that she would not be allowed to visit her friend, she wished to speak for the wives and family who would.

Senator Hernstadt asked Ms. Asire if she would be tempted to marry her friend if this bill were passed? She said yes. She also stated to Senator Hernstadt that her fiancee was in for murder.

Betty Anderson: Mrs. Anderson said that she is the wife of an inmate at Maximum, and she herself works for the State. Mrs. Anderson stated that there is a question of how many inmates would use the education programs even if they were available, and she understood that it was approximated that only 10% would.

Mrs. Anderson said that Warden Charles Wolff has said that 50% of the inmate population are married, and because of that large number, she felt that the visits would be wanted by many.

Senator Hernstadt asked what was the offense in this case? Mrs. Anderson said that she felt that was not relevant to the issue. Senator Hernstadt said that a murder victim might not be in support of conjugal visits.

Senator Faiss commented that conjugal visits may help give inmates incentive to further their education. Mrs. Anderson agreed.

Pamela Ildefonso: Mrs. Ildefonso is married to an inmate at the Maximum facility, and has a daughter two years of age. She commented that it would be easier for them to work out their problems if they could be alone together. And she also said that having to leave her father is very difficult for her two year old daughter.

Senator Hernstadt asked when was her husband eligible for parole? Mrs. Ildefonso said May, 1978.

Carol Garcia: Mrs. Garcia is married to an inmate at Maximum, and she resides in Reno.

Mrs. Garcia said that in discussing the visits with others she has found that many would be willing to pay for each night. She said the privacy is necessary in order that a couple can talk or even fight if they wish. In the current visiting room if an inmate starts an argument with a family member, he can lose his visiting privilege.

Senator Faiss said that even if this Committee did pass the legislation, it would have trouble getting through the money committees.

Lisa Andrews: Ms. Andrews said that the inmates who would participate in such a visitation program are the ones most likely to be rehabilitated. She said that the inmates who are not involved in education programs now, will not be involved no matter how well developed the program becomes. She said yes, an inmate is denied his rights as a United States citizen, but does this mean he is also denied his rights as a human being? She questioned, what about us, the ones on the outside? She stated that she would be willing to pay for the visits.

Ms. Andrews said that she is a fiancée to an inmate, and that she moved here from Massachusetts to be near him.

Senator Hernstadt asked if Ms. Andrews would marry her friend if this bill were passed? Ms. Andrews said they have been trying to obtain permission for this anyway. She said that at this time the Warden is not hearing any requests for marriage.

Lori Trieste: Mrs. Trieste said that she is married by common law to an inmate at Maximum security, and she has children that are sixteen and eight years of age.

Mrs. Trieste said that she felt the people on the outside were the ones that were being treated unfairly by not being allowed visitations. She said that the conditions of the Maximum visiting room were 'awful', and not being allowed to have a normal sex relationship was unhealthy.

Audrey Ryan: Ms. Ryan is engaged to a man in Maximum, who has been in for fifteen years on a murder charge. She said that these visits would help eliminate frustration of being 'cooped up', and would help him when he is released so that he can make the change from institutionalization to everyday social life.

Ms. Ryan moved from California to be near her friend.

Carmen Dugan: Ms. Dugan said that she is the Vice-President of United Families and Friends on the Outside. She is a girlfriend to an inmate at Maximum. Her friend turned down parole before because he did not have anyone to go to on the outside.

She stated that the family and close associates of inmates do time along with him. Ms. Dugan said that her friend has 18 more months before he is eligible for parole. And she also stated that the visiting room at Maximum is 'terrible'.

Anita Clark: Ms. Clark said that she donated a printing press to the Maximum facility in order that they could produce a newsletter, and thereby further their education. She also stated that she has a plan to instruct graphic arts to the inmates. Chairman Schofield stated that he would like to remind Ms. Clark that this bill does not deal with education.

She said that her friend had shot a homosexual who was aggressing him in his own home. She felt that she too was subjected to homosexual behavior when she underwent the 'skin shakes' prior to being allowed to visit an inmate.

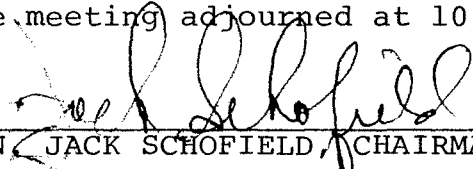
Valerie Mills: Ms. Mills said that she has a boyfriend at Maximum. She stated that she would like to just be held by him at times, however the regulations state that they are only allowed one kiss and one hug at the beginning and

H.R. & F.  
MARCH 25, 1977

PAGE FIVE

the end of the visit. She also said that they plan to marry as soon as he gets out.

The meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

  
SEN. JACK SCHOFIELD, CHAIRMAN

  
SHEBA LYNN WOOLLEY, SECRETARY