

## GREY OWLS COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

This sub-committee will be composed of individuals age 50 and over interested in having mature conversations on certain issues. Send all request slips to the Attention Anthony Brown, HFC Treasurer and Grey Owls founder.

### ACLU AT AMERICA'S EXPENSE, PART 1

The United States is the largest incarcerator in the world, with 2.3 million people behind bars. Prisoners across the country are also getting older and experiencing all the same ailments that afflict those of the same age who are not behind bars, our extreme sentencing policies and a growing number of life sentences have effectively turned many of our correctional facilities into veritable nursing homes— and taxpayers are paying for it.

From 1980 to 2010 the United States prison population grew over 11 times faster than the general population. During this time, the general population increased by 36%, while the state and federal prison population increased by over 400%. According to the National Institute of Corrections, prisoners age 50 and older are considered “elderly” or “aging” due to unhealthy conditions prior to and during incarceration.

- In 1981, there were 8,853 state and federal prisoners age 55 and older. Today that number stands at 124,000 and experts project that by 2030 this number will be over 400,000. Amounting to over one-third of prisoners in the United States. In other words, the elderly prison population is expected to increase by 4,400% over this fifty-year time span.
- The United States keeps elderly men & women locked up despite an abundance of evidence demonstrating that recidivism drops dramatically with age.

- Given the Nation's current over-incarceration epidemic and persistent economic crisis, lawmakers should consider implementing parole reforms to release those elderly prisoners who no longer pose sufficient safety threats to justify their continued incarceration.
- State and Federal governments spend approximately \$77 billion annually to run our penal system. Over the last 25 years, state corrections spending grew by 674%, substantially outpacing the growth of other government spending, and becoming the fourth largest category of state spending. These correction's costs are mainly spent on incarceration, and incarcerating aging prisoners cost far more than younger ones. Specifically, this report finds that it cost \$47,135 per year to house an average prisoner in PA, but costs \$68,270 per year to house a prisoner age 50 and older in PA if one type of medication is involved. To put that number into context, the average American household makes \$40,000 per year in income.
- Releasing many of these individuals will ease the burden on taxpayers and reunite prisoners with their families to care for them. While some of these prisoners may turn to the government for their Healthcare or other needs, government expenditures on released aging prisoners will be far cheaper than the costs of incarcerating them.
- Based on statistical analyses of available data, this report estimates that releasing an aging prisoner will save states, on average \$66,294 per year per prisoner, including Healthcare, other public benefits, parole and any housing cost or tax revenue. Even on the low end, states will save at least \$28,362 per year for each released aging prisoner.

As detailed in the ACLU's 2011 Smart Reform is Possible Report, States have enacted cost-saving. Some states like Louisiana, and New York have enacted laws that would allow for the release of many aging prisoners. At the hearing, the parole board can use a risk assessment instrument to decide whether the prisoner can be safely released. It then provides a fiscal impact analysis demonstrating the cost saving states can realize by

depopulating prisons of those elderly Americans who pose little threat to public safety.

This report makes a number of data-driven findings and issues recommendations for reform. Part 1 provides detailed statistics of our aging prison population and the lower safety risks associated with this population. Part 1 closes with so many men and women to grow old behind bars.<sup>1</sup>

## CADBI QUARTERLY UPDATE/ OCTOBER 3, 2023

### Grey Owls News Alert:

On Tuesday, October 3, 2023, the PA House Judiciary Committee held a hearing on HB587, The Geriatric & Medical Parole bill, sponsored by Rep. Kinsey From Philadelphia. This is the same bill sponsored by Senator Street SB136. After hearing, Rep. Kinsey and other Representatives both for and against, the committee voted 15-10 in favor. All fourteen Democrats and one Republican (Rep. Schemel from Waynesboro) voted in favor of the bill.

The Bill will now move to the House Floor for a vote by the whole House. A date has not yet been scheduled. Once that happens, the Bill will head to the Senate for the same process, before going to Governor Shapiro's desk.<sup>2</sup>

**Note:** From the "How A Bill Becomes A Law In PA,"

The above Bill is at Step 4 of the "How a Bill Becomes Law." flyer.

**Debate:** When a Bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate, it must be considered on three separate days before final passage. This is intended to slow down the legislative process and make sure there is time for public input. The first day of consideration is a reading of the bill with no vote taken and no amendments. The second day can have amendments offered. If a bill requires expenditures of funds it must be sent to the appropriations committee for a "fiscal note" on how much the bill will cost prior to a third consideration. The third day is the vote. 102 are required for passage in the House and 26 in the Senate (constitutional majority).



## A New Hope Don't Let This Bill Go To Waste

Please contact your local State Representative(s) and your State Senator(s) and request their full support for Bill No. 587 (HB587). Representative Kinsey and Other. It's not only a major step into ushering the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania out of its stand-still state of existence, into a more fair and reasonable one, But also finally giving transformed lifers & long termers whom have matured and are not part of the solution, rather than the problem - a second chance at life in the free world, majority of the State throughout the entire country have either allowed parole to be an option for lifers & long termers, or they have changed their laws in order to make it a possibility. Pennsylvania is overdue for change so let's change it together.<sup>3</sup>

### Sources:

1. Prison Health News, 8/15/23
2. CABDI West
3. Pennsylvania Lifers Work Profile Created by Lifers at SCI Graterford, 4th page insert.

We want to thank all the Grey Owls members and non-members, especially the Youth for taking time to read and digest these Newsletters. And also I would like to thank for all the positive feedback, encouragement and support coming in from SCI Forest.

Chairman- Anthony Brown  
Co-Chair- David Marks



### Grey Owls - Mission Statement:

We aim to address certain issues pertinent to the more mature members of the elderly community. Through wisdom, fortitude, and resilience, we will seek to advance the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well being of our members and in doing so benefiting our immediate community.

**GREY OWLS** Est. 2020. A Subcommittee of the  
Lifer's and Long-Termers Committee  
Founder: Anthony Brown, Co-Founder David Marks  
Co-Founder: William "Cool Pop" Abbott (Deceased)

  
**HOPE FOR CHANGE**  
Since 2011