



MEMBERS OF THE RELIGIOUS ALLIANCE IN NEVADA



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Advocates for social justice in Nevada

February 28, 2011

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Larry Struve, RAIN Advocate

Re: RAIN Support for SB 159 with Proposed Amendment

SB 159 would require the Director of the Nevada Department of Corrections to provide certain information to an offender upon the offender's release from prison. Section 1 of this bill would require that the information provided to the offender must include information relating to obtaining employment, including information regarding obtaining bonding for employment.

In the view of RAIN Board members, it is critical that in addition to information relating to assistance for obtaining employment, the offender who is being released from prison must have valid identification if such offender is to have any chance of success in obtaining employment. RAIN felt so strongly about this issue that it launched a fund raising effort in 2010 to obtain funds to put in the special revenue account for reentry created by the 2009 Nevada Legislature (SB 236, 2009 Session.) Hundreds of parishioners responded to this appeal, and over \$14,000 was raised for the purpose of providing valid IDs to prisoners being released back into society. Attached to this memo is a copy of the bulletin insert that RAIN used to support this effort. As is stated therein, if an ex offender does not have a valid ID, he often is unable to find work.

Accordingly, RAIN would like to propose an amendment to SB 159, as follows:

"Add an additional subsection to follow proposed subsection (e) of Section 1 of NRS 209.511 in Section 1 of the bill to read as follows: '[the Director] shall provide the offender either with valid identification that would enable said offender to be eligible for obtaining employment or with information relating to obtaining such identification upon his release and the resources available to obtain it.'"

RAIN has been advised that grant funds are available to pay for having valid IDs prepared for prisoners being released from prison, and other legislation is pending (AB 92) that would waive fees for certain prisoners when they need to obtain a birth certificate or duplicate driver's license or ID card issued by DMV. Thus, it should be feasible for the Director of the Department of Corrections to implement the proposed amendment with minimal impact to his Department. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Larry Struve, RAIN Advocate

EXHIBIT D Senate Committee on Judiciary

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Attachment—Bulletin Insert Prepared by RAIN

NEVADA FAITH COMMUNITIES OF RAIN AND LAMN NEED SUPPORT OF REENTRY INITIATIVE

Nevada's Religious Alliance in Nevada (RAIN) and Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Nevada (LAMN) seek your support by way of contributions for deposit in a new special revenue account in the State Treasury to cover the costs of obtaining valid identification for persons as they are released from incarceration.

Why Is Identification for Newly Released Offenders Important?

Mike G was released from prison without ID in July of 2009. Mike is 25-years-old and has never held legitimate employment. He was released without parole conditions and went to live with his sister. Three months later, Mr. G was charged with a DUI and remains unemployed. Mr. G was not given any training in finding or keeping a job in prison and lives with a sister that allows him to sleep on her couch. He still does not have a copy of his birth certificate.

Daniel J was released to a halfway house in Reno in May of 2009 without a birth certificate. It took 2 months for him to receive this documentation. He then achieved employment quickly. The halfway house allowed him to stay, on condition he pay all back rent (over \$700) when he became employed. Without help in getting proper ID, he would have been homeless.

An ex-offender released without proper ID is:

- **Unable to find work.**
- **Unable to find housing.**
- **Unable to pay restitution, supervision fees or child support.**
- **Cannot access Medicaid.**
- **Cannot obtain a license or identification card from the DMV.**

In September of 2008, The Urban Institute issued a publication titled "Release Planning for Successful Reentry". At a minimum, the report suggests, correctional agencies should ensure that individuals have a state-issued identification card upon release or provide them with an identification card that can easily be exchanged for a state-issued card upon release.

An ex-offender released without proper ID will:

- **Engage in new crimes.**
- **Become a public safety concern.**

Research shows that the first weeks after release are critical in preventing recidivism. Research also shows that employment and stable housing are critical in preventing ex-offenders from returning to a life of crime. Every 10% increase in wages is correlated with a 10-20% decrease in criminal activity. Barriers, such as the inability to obtain an ID, can quickly frustrate someone who has recently been released, has no place to live and no employment. Within 2-3 weeks, it becomes simpler for someone with no other learned coping skills to return to criminal ways in order to make a living than to continue to do the right thing, which is often completely foreign to them. The cycle starts over.

Nevada Does Not Ensure Prisoners Have Proper ID Before Release

Offenders released from Nevada Institutions of Correction are issued a check for \$25 in order to get them to their destination. Efforts are made to help prisoners get ID before release, but many are sent out into society without valid ID.

The majority of United States' Departments of Corrections (DOCs) recognize the need for all inmates to have state issued ID cards upon release. While about two-thirds of DOCs assess an inmate's ID needs prior to discharge, only one third actually ensure that individuals leave prison with a state issued ID, and fewer than half ensure that a prisoner is released with a Social Security card. Nevada does nothing.

The cost to obtain a proper ID is between \$25 to \$42
\$5-25 to obtain a birth certificate
\$17 to obtain a Nevada ID

2009 Nevada Legislature Established a Special Revenue Account that Can Help Newly Released Offenders Obtain Valid ID

In 2009, the Nevada legislature passed, with the strong support of RAIN, SB236. This legislation sets up an account to receive donations and grants to help ex-offenders on reentry. However, there was no money in the State budget to put in this account. Thus, there are currently no funds to help ex-offenders obtain proper identification if they are released back into society without it.

Any and all donations received in the course of the reentry initiative described in this brochure will be deposited into the aforesaid special revenue account. The State of Nevada Office of Criminal Justice Assistance is the agency tasked with accounting for these funds. The Las Vegas Clark County Urban League fields the majority of requests for ID services in Nevada. This agency will bear the cost of obtaining ID's, after which it can be reimbursed from the state account, provided there are funds in it to do so. Requests from other parts of the State will receive reimbursement from the Urban League in Las Vegas. Results will be reported based on the number of individuals assisted and the numbers of birth certificates or ID's obtained and the cost of those ID's. No costs associated with salaries will be attributed to this account.

REQUEST FOR DONATIONS

Please consider making a special donation through your church to help in the reentry initiative of RAIN. Be sure to designate on your check or offering envelope that your gift is designated for the Special Revenue Account for Reentry Established in the Nevada State Treasury. Your donation will be sent by your church to the Reentry Account. Thank you for helping RAIN address this significant public policy concern in Nevada.

"When you do it [for] the least of these, you do it [for] me." Jesus, 25 Matthew: 40

**In Peace,
Governing Boards of RAIN and LAMN**