

# Titus House Newsletter

Titus House Ministries, PO Box 2376, Tijeras, NM 87059

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## THE PUNISHMENT DOES NOT FIT THE CRIME— BY JANICE BELLUCCI



A registrant died yesterday in a Florida jail. He was put into that jail about 60 days ago because he forgot to report his new home address to local law enforcement.

The price he paid for his forgetfulness was death. Death due to exposure to the coronavirus.

A local public defender tried to get this man released from jail. The public defender knew the risk of infection in that jail was high because more than 20 people, including inmates and staff, had already been infected.

The prosecuting attorney also knew the risk of infection in that jail was high as well the minor reason that registrant had been sent to jail. So did the judge.

And yet the judge condemned the registrant to death by refusing to release him.

The message of this sad story is clear. The punishment does not fit the crime.

There is no jury in this nation, if asked, that would condemn a man to death because he forgot to report his new home address. Nor should they.

Forgetting to update your home address should be treated as an infraction at the most. The registrant should have received a “ticket” from law enforcement telling him to remember to report his new home address next time in a timely manner. And perhaps pay a small fine of \$25.

But death?

When I looked at the registrant’s photo online, I saw his cloudy green eyes and sad face. I saw that he needed a haircut and a shave. I guessed that he hadn’t bathed regularly. I also noticed that he didn’t have a car. Perhaps it was his apparent lack of resources that were a factor in why he didn’t report his new home address.

There are many more registrants who are currently facing the threat of infection to the corona virus. In fact, it is conservatively estimated that there are thousands of registrants currently held in jails and prison, some of whom did nothing more than forget to update their home address, the name of their employer or their automobile.

There is an even larger number of registrants, perhaps more than 750,000, who face the threat of infection outside of jail and prison because they are required to register in person. Although their exposure to infection is more limited, any exposure to coronavirus is unnecessary because there are alternative effective methods by which a person can register.

In fact, there are a few jurisdictions that have already started registration using alternative methods.

For example, the Los Angeles Police Department which supervises more than 3,900 registrants will only register individuals by phone. The state of Oregon is also registering individuals by phone while the state of Pennsylvania is registering individuals by mail.

For those who continue to require in-person registration and to incarcerate individuals who do not pose a current danger to society our warning is this: there will be blood on your hands. You will ultimately be held responsible for the death of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people who die a painful death due to exposure to the coronavirus. And remember, one or more of those who die could be someone you love.



## KAT'S BLOG: WE ALL SAW IT COMING

From—Alliance for Constitutional Sex Offense Laws

Those who live their lives on the registry knew it would happen, it was only a matter of time.

The pandemic strikes, those in society that are used to everyday freedoms, suddenly forced to quarantine, out of work, told they may be under restrictions for a month, maybe two, at the most three before life returns to normal.

Everyone jumps on board, eager to do their part to contain “the danger” looming outside their door.

A few short weeks later we’re advised that this all may take longer, much longer than we thought. We may never get back to “normal”. It may be a year and a half until we have a vaccine and we may be wearing personal protective equipment until 2022! Who knows when schools will restart or when states will open their borders? Shopping, bars, gyms, churches, all closed. Life as everyone knows it, has changed.

And now the government announces there will be a new phase of virus control called “contact tracing”. It will track those with the virus and everyone they’ve had contact with. Governmental health workers may be calling our homes, asking us questions about our personal health and the names and phone numbers of those we’ve had contact with. Some of us will receive a sentence of isolation, for others, the lesser sentence to self-monitor. It all depends on your risk factor. (Oddly enough risk factors aren’t taken into consideration on the sex offender registry, same registry for everyone, high or low risk.)

In a strange twist of karma, whether they realize it or not, the rest of the world is getting a sense of “life on the registry”. It’s a life where rules change constantly, there is seemingly no end to social distancing, nothing is ever certain, information is always vague and governmental



workers want to know your business. Everyone is now on a rollercoaster very much like what registrants are on, with twists and turns you have no control of, no end in sight and if there was an end in sight, the rules can always change so there isn’t.

The registry was designed to “track” registrants, letting the government know where they lived and worked, how close they could get to schools, parks, athletic fields, greenways, etc. It limits registrant’s freedoms on a daily basis. “It’s needed” society was told, “it will keep everyone safe”. And society thought it was a great idea.

Little by little the pandemic has taken away the daily freedom’s that society is used to. It’s taken away their freedom to work, to socialize, to have human contact with family and friends. For some, it’s taken the very food off their tables and for many, in the near future if things don’t improve, probably the roofs over their heads. And now, “contact tracing” will take away their privacy.

One can’t help but wonder how long before the country rises up and

screams that they want their freedoms back.

Everyone’s been isolating for weeks. Patience is wearing thin. They’re tired of the corona virus pandemic and the rules and restrictions that come with it. They don’t want government workers contacting them, asking personal information. We are a society that values its privacy, we don’t want to be tracked. The idea that our personal information, our corona virus status, might end up on a registry available to the public, our friends, neighbors, potential employers, is abhorrent. There’s a limit on how much privacy society will give up for safety’s sake, the amount of caution they’re willing to take to protect others.

Many are reaching their limit; the pot is beginning to boil.

Yes, we saw it coming.

What better time than now to enlighten society. This is what life on the sex offender registry is like, day to day uncertainty, vagueness, rules, regulations, restrictions, privacy issues, loss of family, friends, jobs and housing. This is what society’s laws have done to registrants.

For registrants, having to live like this has been the norm, the normal that society said they deserved, the normal they allowed the government to enforce, the normal they didn’t want to have to see, hear or think about. Registrants were the “danger” looming outside the door, the “danger” that needed to be contained. If tracking us on a sex offender registry was the answer, if it was going to keep society “safer”, so be it.

Well, now this is everyone’s normal, too.

During this trying time  
Titus House could use  
your support.



## Polygraphs and attending group counselling

By Larry Neely

On April 22nd the National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL) strongly condemned the New Mexico Department of Corrections, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, and other supervising authorities that have not acted responsibly, and demanded an immediate cessation of in-person visits for the purpose of administering polygraph examinations or for attending in-person group counselling sessions.

NARSOL confirmed that the Departments of Corrections of New Mexico, and Oklahoma are continuing to require those being supervised by probation and parole to come in person for scheduled polygraph examinations. Additionally, New Mexico, is requiring that those under supervision following a sexual crime conviction continue their mandated in-person group therapy sessions.

It is clearly obvious that the close proximity required in connecting a subject to a polygraph instrument puts the recipient and the administrator of the examination at risk of infection. In addition, many individuals on probation and parole rely on public transportation to get to the testing site, which adds yet another layer of increased risk to themselves and others for contracting the virus.

New Mexico's Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham declared a state of public health emergency and issued a directive enforcing the health department's strong recommendations of social distancing and stay-at-home requirements except in very specific situations.

Neither taking nor administering a polygraph is one of the specific situations.

A source in Oklahoma verified that continued polygraph requirements are also the case in that state.

NARSOL reached out to supervising officials in other states before issuing the condemnation. Cynthia Stevens, Maricopa County, Arizona Director of Adult Sex Offender Probation, responded to the issue, saying, "Each probationer's circumstances are determined on a case by case basis. Polygraphs and other testing and assessments are also determined on a case by case basis . . ." In like manner, Chris Lobanov-Rostovsky, head of Colorado's sex offender management board, verified the ambiguity in policy that leaves some programs still requiring the polygraphs be administered in defiance of all warnings and even mandates from health officials.

**Continue pg. 4 Polygraph**

## A mother's frantic plea: Stop the evil that is happening inside our federal prisons

By Sandy . . . A mother whose son is incarcerated in a federal prison in Ohio and may have Covid-19 reached out to me. After verifying the facts she had given me, I wrote an article and sent it to all of the major newspapers in Ohio. The Vindicator printed it. They have edited the end, seriously weakening my outrage and my anger. This is the link to their printing, and I am printing my piece here without the edits.

The names used are pseudonyms. Frantic over the possibility that her incarcerated son has Covid-19 and is not being tested or properly treated, Angie is desperately reaching out for help to anyone who will listen. Matthew is an inmate at the Elkton Federal Institution in Lisbon, Ohio. He is deemed low risk and has email privileges. He has written his mother and father that he is being quarantined, along with others, in an isolation unit at the prison. His symptoms

include temperature, shortness of breath, low blood oxygen level, vomiting, and body and muscle pain, including severe headache.

Elkton, an institution of over 2,000 individuals, was allotted only five Covid-19 testing kits. A recent article confirmed that at least 80 inmates there have symptoms and at least three have tested positive, with one death confirmed from the virus. Angie and Paul, Matthew's father, have repeatedly tried for days to reach the facility with no success; the telephone rings with no answer. The Ohio Department of Health has also tried unsuccessfully to get through by telephone to the institution.

The parents are frantic. Their son should be given routine diagnostic exams, such as blood work and a chest x-ray as his symptoms could be caused from something other than Covid-19. He should be receiving oxygen treatments regardless. He

should be tested for the virus. He should be released to a hospital where these medical procedures can be performed since our federal prisons seem unable to extend even the most basic of medical care to those for whom they are responsible.

At their last communication from him, none of these things were happening.

Keeping low-level inmates incarcerated during this health crisis is criminal.

Having only five testing kits available for a large prison, one where there have been confirmed cases of Covid-19 with one already resulting in death, is criminal.

Failing to keep parents apprised of the condition of their ill son is cruel and criminal.

What is happening in Elkton Federal Institution and other such institutions is definitely criminal.

It is murder.



## Titus House Ministries

PO Box 2376  
Tijeras, NM 87059

Phone: (505) 286-8807

Alice's Cell (505) 259-0867

Don's Cell: (505) 315-7940

Email: donmagicjohnston@gmail.com

We're on the Web  
titushouseministries.org

Hebrew 13:3 - Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Remember if you change your address you need to let us know if you want to continue to receive this newsletter



# PRISON PHONE COMPANIES ARE PROFITING FROM A PANDEMIC, HERE'S HOW THE FCC CAN HELP

[thehill.com – 4/21/20]

These days, most of us are staying in touch with our loved ones by phone calls or video chats. A single phone call costs us nearly nothing, a video chat requires only a Wi-Fi connection.

But for millions of people, it isn't so easy. As jails and prisons suspend in-person visits, most incarcerated people and their families are paying outrageously high costs to simply stay connected. The Federal Bureau of Prisons just made voice and video visitation free in its 122 prisons, and while noteworthy, this isn't enough to ensure that the majority of families can remain in touch at such a crucial time. The majority of the incarcerated population, upwards of 1.7 million people, are in state prisons and local

jails, where they will probably face excessive fees to call home. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) needs to push prison phone companies to lower their rates so every family can maintain a connection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Incarcerated people, their families and other allies have been fighting for phone justice for years, but a pandemic like COVID-19 reminds us once again how cruel and unjust these exorbitant call rates are and why rate relief is needed immediately. Prison call rates can cost over \$1 a minute and on average, an in-state phone call from jail costs three times as much as one from prison. The national average for a 15-minute call from jail is \$5.74. Thanks to a helpful tool from the Prison Policy Institute, I know that by the time it takes you to read this op-ed, a call from New York's Allegheny County Jail for this amount of time would cost about \$7.50, just shy of New York's tipped wage for a single hour of work.

## Polygraph

Many of those so affected are those under community supervision resulting from a conviction for a sexual offense. "While supervision of those under its jurisdiction is important, its importance does not supersede the health and safety of all concerned. The department has other means of monitoring offenders without putting anyone in jeopardy and without defying orders from New Mexico's governor," stated Ashley Reymore-Cloud, attorney for NARSOL's New Mexico affiliate Liberty and Justice Coalition. "And treatment sessions

can most definitely be held by alternative means."

Sources in Minnesota report that all polygraph testing there has been suspended and all treatment programs are handling group sessions via telephone conference calls until such time that the Covid-19 stay at home policy has been removed by the government.

Brenda Jones, NARSOL's executive director stated, "The National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws strongly protests this reckless disregard for public health orders and urges that all supervising authorities suspend these requirements immediately."

## Circle of Concern

Circle of Concern is aimed at breaking down isolation and fear by providing a safe place for registrants and their loved ones to get together, build community, and learn ways to step out and take charge of their lives and overcome the stigma

they face. The Circle of Concern is a group of concerned registered citizens, family and friends that meet together on the 3rd Sunday of each month. Due to this COVID-19 we will not be meeting until further notice.. We meet at Foothills Fellowship Church, corner of

Tramway and Candelaria on the far east side of Albuquerque. We encourage and try to help each other. It is a safe place to share our strengths and struggles. We hope you will join us. If you are planning to attend call Don at (505) 315-7940.