

# Titus House Newsletter

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

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## Halloween signs declared unconstitutional: Butts County Sheriff Gary Long appears to have conceded



By Larry . . . Last week [NARSOL reported on a case](#) in Georgia we sponsored challenging Butts County Sheriff Gary Long's requirement that all registrants in Butts County must post signs on Halloween or face criminal prosecution. We undertook this case because we believe that law enforcement must not be permitted to invent their own requirements as Sheriff Long and so many others routinely do. A three-judge panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit agrees with us and banned the practice. It now appears that Sheriff Long has accepted the defeat.

[According to the local newspaper](#), the *Jackson Progress-Argus*, Sheriff Long posted the following response to the ruling on the BCSO Facebook page on Jan. 20:

My job, as [s]heriff, is to protect the people of this [c]ounty. The appeals [c]ourt did not rule in my favor, but it was a fight I was determined to fight for the safety of our children. . . . The ruling from the appeals court is what we must follow, and this fight brings clarity to every [s]heriff in the state of Georgia. Despite if I agree with this ruling or not, it is now the law of the land, and I took an oath to follow those laws. I promise you, the people, that we will continue to protect your rights and protect this county's most valuable assets, our children. Going forward my office will follow the ruling of the court and will not place the signs in sex offender's yards, but we will, in fact, put safeguards in place to continue to protect your children. I will always stand up and fight for what I believe in and what I think will protect you, the people. It is an honor and privilege to serve as your [s]heriff.

Marc Treadwell, chief judge of the U.S. District Court in Macon, heard the case initially and barred Long from posting the signs, a position he later reversed by ruling in Long's favor. He said that if the plaintiffs did not agree with the message conveyed by the posted signs, they were free to post their own signs beside them stating their disagreement.

That ruling was then overturned by the appeals court, and chief judge Frank Hull wrote in response, "If the only constitutional requirement for the government to compel citizens to host its speech on their private property is that it also permits them to post a second sign disagreeing with the first, the Sheriff could place any sign identifying himself as the speaker in any county resident's yard."

Hull further commented that Georgia law does not forbid persons on the sex offense registry from participating in Halloween activities and that Sheriff Long acknowledges there have been no issues with any registrants in Butts County.

This case was discussed in detail on the [Registry Matters Podcast](#). Although *Registry Matters* is not a NARSOL production, it is an important resource for information and analysis of current events.



## What's in a Name?

I was reading recent articles in Prison Legal News by editor Paul Wright and activists Jeffrey Ian Ross. The essence of these essays focused on what do we call someone in - or has been in - prison. Are they an inmate, prisoner, detainee, convict, offender, etc.? When their release do we call them an ex-con, ex-Fallon, returning citizen, former prisoner, etc.?

This discussion brought to mind what do we call ourselves - those who at some point in our lives committed (or were convicted of) a sex offense? Obviously, the state and (much of society) labels us as "sex offenders", but of course that's an explosive and demeaning label - not to mention grossly misleading. Why do we choose to label someone for their past actions at all? After all, although I'm old enough to remember, we no longer label someone as a divorcee, adulterer, or even a failure. Are such labels - whether inmate, prisoner, ex-con, or even registered citizen helpful or harmful? Do they lead to healing and reconciliation or simply cause more pain and separation?

Constitutional Sex Offense Laws (ACSOL) has a new mailing address:

ACSOL  
2110 K Street  
Sacramento, CA 95816

The new address is very similar to the old address. The only changes are the "house" number and the last digit of the zip code. Please address all future correspondence to the new address effective immediately. Thank you.

Is there an answer? Paul Wright suggests, "Asking prisoners and ex-prisoners how they want to be referred to allows a degree of agency and self-determination that is otherwise denied." What would you prefer to be called? For me, I am first of all a man, a beloved child of God and many other things but to the extent that someone else is describing me my identity is in some way determined by my relationship with them. Therefore, I'm either a son, brother, dad, uncle, cousin, nephew, grandson, etc. Outside of my family, I'm a friend, neighbor, coworker, etc.

We have an unfortunate mean habit of labeling people we do not know, what gives us the right? For the past 16 years I lived above among many neighbors, sallies, bunkees, friends, and men I love as my brothers. All of them - including me - were once accused or convicted of a "sex offense". Yet, by the men I've come to know - and in many instances to love and respect - not once have I considered them to be a "sex of-

We would like to thank the unsung hero who helps make this publication. He is a registered citizen.



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REGISTRY

fender" but rather a brother or a friend.

While I'm here, I prefer to be called a brother, neighbor, or friend "in prison". Does it really matter why? When I'm released, I hope to be called a brother, a dad, grandpa, neighbor, friend, coworker, or anything else that describes our current relationship. Is that too much to expect? I hope not!

Gary W. Hardy, PhD is currently in prison in Arizona. He's also the author of a soon to be released book, "Silence in the Face of Injustice: A Vision of Mercy and Hope." He may be contacted through [garywhardyphd@gmail.com](mailto:garywhardyphd@gmail.com)

Titus House Ministries conducts a morning devotional using "Our Daily Bread". This is for Registrants, family and friends. We would like you to join us each morning at 7:00 AM (Mountain Standard Time), 6:00 AM (Pacific ) 8:00AM (Central), 9:00AM (Eastern).

It is a Free Conference Call, you need to call this number (605) 475-4092. The access code is 278954 # (pound).

We hope you will join us.

You will find a new enclosed envelope. We are asking for your help in donations of money or stamps. We are in financial need at this time.



## The Treasure Chest



Use your time wisely: In 2003 my life was turned upside down due to my addictions and criminal behavior. I had been drug-free for over a decade. I was a born-again, Bible believing Christian with a beautiful wife and beautiful children. Unfortunately, the enemy was doing what the enemy does. **Divide and conquer!** My wife and I separated and within two years I had relapsed. I had become a deviant mess of a man. I was arrested and charged with the sexual crime. I was guilty and I knew that I would be going to prison. I was sentenced to (4yrs - LIFE). On all the paperwork they wrote **LIFE**. I was scared and uncertain of what future held for myself and my family. I had heard the horrifying stories of what they do to sex offenders in prison. I considered suicide in County jail. I made the decision early in my sentence that, if I made it through prison, I was going to come out a changed man, for the better. **I embraced my time in the Department of Corrections and utilized every self-help program offered on the inside.** I deeply cultivated the soil of my heart by the cleansing of my mind, thoughts and behaviors through God's cleansing word. I used the DOC as my wilderness experience. Like a monastery inside the fences. Spent countless hours in spiritual programs, educational programs, therapeutic programs. Never knowing if I would ever be released from the DOC I was determined to become the man I was supposed to be, in Christ. I went into prison and eighth grade dropout. I received my GED and went on to college classes. I began teaching agriculture curriculum to other inmates. I gained additional trade skills while incarcerated, that would help me to be successful, if I was released. After 8 ½ years, in an intensive therapy program, I was able to gain a recommendation for parole. I was granted parole in 2014. Severely institutionalized, it took me over two years to acclimate to being outside the fences. However, I was grateful to have an opportunity at life again. **I began implementing what I had learned in the DOC.** Following all the rules and stipulations of parole. Walking as a man with integrity and character. Today, over eight years later, I am recognized as an asset to my community, as well as a successful business owner. No one treats me a SO (except the parole officer) but as a positive member of this community. I say all these things not to brag but, to give you hope that there is life after prison. You can do whatever you put your mind to. But you must prepare and apply yourself. Success is not free and it does not come easy. It takes careful planning and implementation but, it can be accomplished. Coming out of the DOC I was fearful that people would judge me as an SO. What I have learned is people judge you for what you are doing presently, not what you have done in the past. However, it takes courage, obedience, steadfastness and consistency to walk as a man of Godly integrity. Success begins long before your ever released. Don't waste that precious time you have in the DOC. Once you are released, the cares of the world set in. Paying bills, responsibilities, commitments, work. You will never get quality time to work on yourself like you have in the department of corrections. Use your time wisely. Prepare for success. Then live it! LAM

## Riding with Jon



With my trailer loaded and bill of lading signed, I left the Busch Brewery Warehouse in Columbus, Ohio and jumped onto I-270 West and connected with I-70 West. My destination: Sacramento, California! Beginning my trip in Columbus, I-70 is a direct road to Sacramento. I started my trip west and kept going!

I-70 begins at Baltimore, Maryland and it ends in Sacramento. The trip across the entire country is 2,880 miles. From Columbus, it is 2,460 miles. It would take 4 days to complete my trip. TRUTH: if you staying I-70 and keep going west, you will eventually end up in Sacramento.

There are things to see on the journey. I could stop in Effingham, Illinois and visit the Trucker's chapel or I could stop in St. Louis to watch a Cardinals game or to

visit the Arch. I could stop in Colby, Kansas and see the hometown of Metropolitan Opera bass Samuel Ramey. I could ski the mountains of Colorado or visit Eagle Canyon or one of several National Parks in Utah. I could camp in the Virgin River Canyon in Arizona and visit the Marine Base at 29 Palms, California. If I wanted to, at any point I could turn around and head back to Columbus. I could even go all the way the other direction to Baltimore and eat crab cakes! But the important truth is this: If I staying I-70 and keep going west, I WILL end up in Sacramento!

So it goes with life's journey. Which direction are you going? Are you on the fast track to Sacramento? Perhaps you have found a favorite place to stop and enjoy the view. Perhaps you are stuck at a stopping point. Perhaps you don't even want to go all the way to Sacramento! Which road are you traveling and where does it end up?

My life was heading to Sacramento. I didn't want to go there. One day, I stopped and asked Jesus to save me from ending up in a place I didn't want to go. He chose a better destination for me. He brought me back home to Columbus and He found an even better place for me to complete my journey. One day, I will be there. In the meantime, He is showing me the sights and guiding my feet there.

Today, I am inviting you to join me in my journey. Ask Jesus to guide you. He will show you the sights. We all end up on the same road, headed to the end in an ultimate destination. Through Christ, God will guide you home.

Safe and productive travels.  
Jon.



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We're on the Web  
[titushouseministries.org](http://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



## JANICE'S JOURNAL: FEAR OBSCURES FACT

A recent TV news show on a completely different topic recently introduced me to the phrase, "Fear Obscures Fact." That short phrase struck a nerve as it concisely explains one of the major obstacles in the registrant community.

There is a plethora of data in studies and reports from both government and academia stating the facts. For example, the rate of re-offense for individuals required to register is very low and continues to decrease the more time they spend in the community. This rate of re-offense is as low as less than one percent for registrants on parole.

Another example is that the registry is ineffective in large part because it gives families a false sense of security. That is, many families believe that if they protect their children from individuals required to register, their children will be safe. That is not so, however, because the perpetrators of at least 90 percent of child sex abuse are not on the registry, but instead are family members, teachers, coaches, clergy and law enforcement officials.

We repeat these messages over and over when we lobby and in lawsuits we file yet they are not heard. Why?

If we accept the premise that "Fear Obscures Fact" we can start to understand. According to brain scientists, humans have a part of the brain called the "reptilian brain." In case you haven't heard of that part of the brain, it is often described as the center for "fight or flight." It is the part of the brain that increased the success of cavemen and cavewomen escaping from a hungry saber tooth tiger.

While the "reptilian brain" helps humans escape from physical harm, the same part of the brain shuts down critical thinking as

well as the ability to absorb new information. Think about that. If a human believes he or she or his or her loved ones are in danger, they cannot think critically, and they cannot absorb new information. Therefore, if a human believes that all registrants are monsters and are ready to pounce on their next victim, the human may literally be unable to hear and understand the facts they are given.

So what can we do?

According to communications experts, the most effective way to communicate a message that others may not want to hear is to frame that message in a way that does not frighten the listener and therefore does not trigger the "reptilian brain." I learned this lesson a few years ago while lobbying in the state capitol.

I observed that when I told those with whom I was meeting that I am an advocate for the civil rights of registrants, they shut down. Although their eyes were open, their ears were closed. After many tries, I developed a new message, which is that I am an advocate for the protection of the Constitution (pause) which can only be achieved by restoring the civil rights of registrants.

It was the same message, but delivered differently. And the results have been tremendous and produced positive results both in the state capitol and in courtrooms.

We need to continue this trend, that is, to re-frame our messages so that our listeners are no longer afraid. It will take a lot of work and especially the crafting of careful language, but it will be worth it because it will take us to the Tipping Point where registrants are no longer treated as the lepers of society, but instead as human beings.

May it be so. From ACSOL



Circle of Concern has gone ZOOM

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. We are meeting this month on **March 20** at 3 pm—5 p.m. MST. We will meet on Zoom. 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.. He will send you the link to join by computer or phone. You can contact him at the number above or email him at [donmagicjohnston@gmail.com](mailto:donmagicjohnston@gmail.com)