

Good morning,

As someone who went to prison for a sex offense, I can tell you what it feels like to be locked up. I can tell you how I lost everything. Family, friends, a career, all gone.

I accepted my actions, I took full responsibility for the decisions I made and was actually thankful for the courts for my sentence because it gave me a chance to change, a chance of rehabilitation, which we all say is the "purpose of prison". I took the classes, completed my sentence with no disciplinary issues and was released from prison, ready to rebuild my life.

As a person on the sex offender registry, I can tell you what it feels like to have never completed my sentence. To be put on a registry, that's available for all the world to see, to be told "you can't work here" or "you can't live here" means my punishment never ends.

Trying to get a job was an event that left me broken, ashamed, and in tears more times than I can count. Trying to find safe and suitable housing, almost impossible. Both of these things are considered cornerstone to a good reentry into "the community". A community, that because of bad information, sensational news, and the false promise of security that comes with the SO registry, doesn't want us. We may have well never left prison. Our time never ends.

As an offender with the smallest percent of recidivism, being on the the registry is the easiest way to reoffend. It's not likely to be another sex offense to send someone back, it's going to be a simple violation of one of the many, small stipulations and rules the SO registry puts on us. 15 years of no issues, then one day selling your car and not updating the registry in the proper time and you can be sent back to prison. Believing that everyone you meet is going to point and start yelling "sex offender" makes developing support systems and safety nets very difficult. We are made to feel isolated and alone, our time never ends.

Having an option to ask the courts for some relief just makes sense. Other states have implemented it and it can work. Giving someone a goal, giving someone a chance to serve their time, isn't that what rehabilitation is about?

Thank you.

Matt Grover