

We Aint Got No Paper

This is what an officer here at USP Tucson told me, when I requested writing paper after a few days of not receiving any.

To understand this further, let me paint the picture:

USP Tucson went on a COVID-19 lockdown on October 21st, 2020. When that happened, the prison then cut off all phonecalls, preventing inmates from contacting their loved ones.

From October 21st to now, February 2021, we've not been able to call our loved ones, which is a clear case of a punitive and abusive act. It's not that they can't let us call - it's that they won't.

So, we have to rely on writing letters. But USP Tucson cuts off our canteen. Now we can't buy stamps, envelopes, paper, pens and the like, to write letters. From October 21st to Jan 4th, we could not purchase anything. On January 4th, we were allowed a measly \$20 limit. After 90 days of no canteen, hygiene was near top priority. It wasn't that they couldn't allow us canteen before then, it's that they wouldn't.

Are you catching on here?

So, we have to rely on the prison issuing the basics of writing: envelopes, paper, stamps and pencils. By policy, they **MUST** provide this at all times.

But today, after requesting envelopes and paper for 2 days, an officer tells me, "We aint got no paper".

How can a government facility **NOT** have paper?

It doesn't cost a fortune to supply paper or envelopes to a prison; this is not a budget-eater. Let's do a little math, so you can see where I'm coming from:

USP Tucson houses about 1300 inmates. Not everybody writes, so let's drop the number to half = 700 inmates who write. On average, a prison may issue (if they're doing their job), 5 envelopes, 10 sheets of paper per week. That's 20 envelopes, 40 sheets of paper per month, to 700 inmates. Being conservative, that's 14,000 envelopes and 28,000 sheets of paper per month.

Ask yourself this, how much would this amount of supplies cost, at retail?

Office supply stores like Wal-Mart, Office Depot and Staples sell boxes of 100 envelopes; let's say a box of 100 costs \$1.50 (Just so you know, inmates are being ripped →

off, paying \$1.75 for a box of 50 envelopes - who's the real criminals?) Dollar General had an ad where they sold 125 sheets of paper for 75 cents! (Just so you know, we're paying about \$1.95 for 50 sheets of paper, again, who's the real criminal?)

Just off those numbers, proportionally speaking, to supply those 700 inmates here with 5 envelopes a week, and 10 sheets of paper, should cost about \$200.00 for envelopes, and about \$175.00 for paper. A total of under \$400.00 a month - and I assure you, the government buying in bulk gets a better deal.

I say all this to imply two things: one - prisons buy in bulk, and two, the cost is less than what the average person would pay. I assure you, the warehouse here is stocked very well with paper, pencils, envelopes and the like.

Especially now, since during the COVID-19 pandemic, we've not been able to call our loved ones. The mental torture USP Tucson is putting inmates through is an act of Cruel and Unusual Punishment, and after 90 days of not calling loved ones on Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day - or any day, is nothing short of a malicious act of injustice.

But to compensate, there should at least be a plentiful supply of paper, envelopes and the like, so we can at least write to our loved ones. Staff clearly understands the critical need for us to be able to communicate, right?

Right?

So, how can you not have paper available for days? Pardon me while I make an assumption:

It's not that they don't have paper to give us, it's that they won't give us paper.

I've shown a line of negligence and malicious acts by staff, to prevent inmates from the basic right to contact loved ones. These are fundamental staples for prisons - you must have it available, especially during a critical time such as a pandemic, when we must keep in touch with our loved ones.

But, if you don't have paper to give, either you really don't have it, or you simply don't want to give it.

I'm leaning to the latter; it's par for the course here.