

7/30/2021

Warden and Deputy Warden fired by Governor

The South Dakota Department of Corrections is messed up, has a lot of problems that have been ignored for decades and is corrupt. I have been saying this for years here at the Jameson Annex of the South Dakota State Penitentiary, and the recent firings and administrative leaves of senior officials in the SDDOC by Governor Kristi Noem on Thursday July 15th 2021 prove what I say is true.

I have previously filed a lawsuit about the unconstitutional practices by the South Dakota Department of Corrections ~~and~~ prison employees and nothing was really done about it. Please see the October 31st, 2019 ruling/opinion/order of magistrate judge Veronica L. Duffy in the 1983 civil rights lawsuit I filed in case: Shane Bell v. Darin Young et al., Civ. 16-4046 (8th Cir. 2016). But when a letter with an ~~sent~~ anonymous complaint was sent to the Governor that alleged supervising correctional officers regularly sexually harassed their fellow employees, nepotism in promotions, low employee morale, low wages, and body armor not up to standards, then the governor fired the warden, deputy warden and suspended on administrative leave the Secretary of Corrections and the director of Pheasantland Industries, a prison work program. The Governor acted quickly when prison staff bring up misconduct, but when prisoners bring up misconduct it's ignored.

This shows how when legitimate issues are brought to prison officials attention, it is ignored or denied. I was intrepid in my pursuit of my beliefs and wanting to change this prison I filed the previously mentioned lawsuit. It now appears that change may finally occur here. The governor stated at a press conference from the Jameson visiting room on Friday 7/23/2021 that there are still on-going investigations and that every employee will be evaluated.

The prison is currently between 50-70 prison employees short and mandatory overtime has been put into effect. More and more prison staff appear to be quitting for better jobs or to get away from this place.

The state reported \$86 million surplus this year with a total of \$302 million in state reserves as well as \$2.2 billion dollars in Covid-19 relief.

I am glad that change is happening, but I hope that the prison staff do get the pay raises, body armor, and harassment free work environment, but are also held more accountable for their actions when it comes to violating prisoners constitutional rights and being held to a higher standard of ethics as public employees. Everything is connected and influences the other, by actually holding everyone accountable for their actions, it prevents the problems we are currently, and have been for years facing today.