

As Governor Sisolak's appointee to represent the public on the State Council on Libraries and Literacy, I can attest that Nevada's prison libraries have for many years been in violation of NDOC AR 840 (Library Services), established under the authority of NRS 209.131. Examples of regs that NDOC ignores are: "each facility should maintain and/or provide access to comprehensive library services, which include but are not limited to, a reference collection" and "Library services should be available daily." Library books, like higher education, are proven solutions to the problem of recidivism. An Oversight Panel is sorely needed to assess and confront this woeful state of neglect. Incarcerated people, the institutions and the public at large would all benefit.

Prison libraries benefit NDOC institutions by providing constructive and satisfying ways to use offenders' time, which both decreases facility violence and prepares offenders to successfully reintegrate upon release. As with education in general, libraries can greatly reduce recidivism. According to Stanford Law School's "Corrections to College California" report, every dollar invested in education or books returns at least \$5 to the taxpayer.

An Oversight Panel would serve all Nevadans by raising NDOC standards and ensuring attention to rehabilitation. Given that Pell Grants will be available to the incarcerated starting in 2023, it's all the more urgent that we start fixing the sorry state of NDOC libraries. Currently, inmates have no access to NSHE academic materials such as online databases or reference books. All NSHE students, even incarcerated ones, have the right to encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other books to get their assignments completed.

Similarly, Nevada's incarcerated are not allowed to request Inter-Library Loans from public or academic libraries. The general interest "library" at the women's facility, FMWCC, amounts to a couple of shelves of fewer than 120 old books -- certainly unworthy of the word "library". =The only way for an inmate in Nevada to get general information beyond the so-called prison library is to mail

their reference request to Nevada's one – one! -- designated staff person permitted to respond. As you can imagine, this library staff person has a monumental backlog of inmate questions, so timely responses are out of the question.

Since nearly every NDOC prisoner will eventually be released, up-to-date career and re-entry books should be readily available in all prison libraries. This is a gaping need that an Oversight Panel must address. Likewise, the Oversight Panel has a crucial role to play in helping inmates navigate the Pell Grant process. These Pell funds could transform both the prisons and the prisoners if the Oversight Panel was empowered to smooth the way for college success.

NDOC needs to get expertise on how best to partner with academic and public libraries, and an Oversight Panel could serve as a valuable partner. The Nevada State Council on Libraries and Literacy encourages and guides all of Nevada's publicly funded libraries to receive federal grant funds annually (via the Library Services & Technology Act). Collaboration between an Oversight Committee and NDOC could ensure these federal funds are acquired. In conclusion, the attention and feedback provided by NDOC Oversight Panels are essential to righting wrongs of institutional neglect, assessing compelling needs and finding solutions.