

Louisiana Department of Corrections

INSIDE OUT

Keeping Loved Ones Informed

A Message from the Secretary

As the holidays come to an end, I hope you were able to spend time with your loved ones. We know it is tough to be away from someone who is incarcerated. I encourage you to use our available platforms to stay in touch with your incarcerated loved ones. Each incarcerated person is allowed 20 phone numbers for family, friends, and legal calls. If you want to use written words, you may also use our JPAY e-mail service or send your letters through the standard U.S. mail system.



One of our recent highlights occurred on December 6, 2022 when the LCIW class of 2022 walked across the stage. Many women, who had not graduated from high school, earned HSET equivalent diplomas, associate degrees and certifications in fields like cosmetology and computer technology. The Freedom Reads prison literacy program also donated new libraries to the Dixon Correctional Institute, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center, and Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women. The movement gained more steam when R&B superstar John Legend donated to the creation of a new library at Louisiana State Penitentiary in November.

In 2023, we will keep expanding our vocational and educational programs. These critical courses give inmates a huge leg up when they return to society. Once released, parolees are also helped by organizations like The United Way, Louisiana Parole Project, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans and Goodwill. All of those groups received funds saved after the Justice Reinvestment initiative was created five years ago. On behalf of our department, have a wonderful new year!

Secretary James "Jimmy" Le Blanc



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SLCC Welding Program Sparks Change for Inmates

Unemployment, poverty and low wage jobs often lead to prison. The solution to this cycle is education. In 2017, South Louisiana Community College joined with the Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office to create a welding program for inmates. The three semester program gives students the skills to step into a high-wage, high-demand job after release. Those jobs will give graduates stability and reduce recidivism rates.

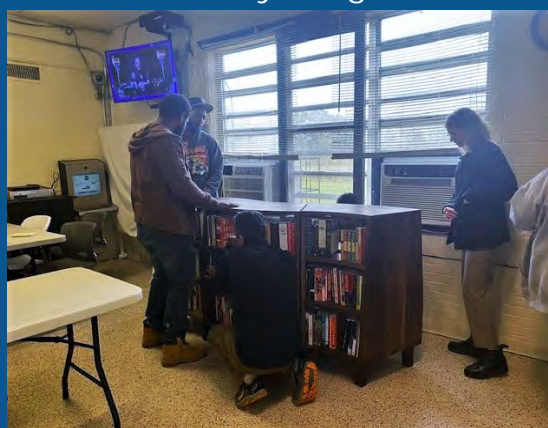
The program's pupils may come from different circumstances, but they get the same learning experience as any other SLCC welding student. The curriculum includes classroom learning and hands-on experience at an outdoor studio donated by SLCC, which features tools needed to learn skills like stick welding and metal insert gas welding. Upon graduation, students leave with a technical diploma and three National Center for Construction Education and Research certifications.

Critics of prison education may question the program's validity, but the proof is in the stats. 9 of the program's 16 graduates are currently working in welding jobs through work-release programs or full-time employment. "These guys are amazing," said Jessica Hall, Sheriff's Office or Reentry supervisor. "For them to be able to accomplish this while in jail and through the pandemic and do everything they need to do to be college graduates, it's an amazing accomplishment."



Freedom Reads Brings Books to LSP and DCI

Recently, Freedom Reads delivered brand new libraries to Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, Dixon Correctional Institute, and Louisiana State Penitentiary. These libraries provide the prisons' inmate population with reading opportunities in their housing areas. Earlier this year, Freedom Reads delivered libraries to Elayn Hunt Correctional Institute and Louisiana State Penitentiary. Thank you, Dwayne Betts and Freedom Reads for your generous donation!



The DOC Breaks Ground on LCIW

On September 1, 2022, Governor John Bel Edwards, Secretary Jimmy Le Blanc, and several state and local leaders turned dirt on the property where Louisiana's newest prison is being built. After six years, construction on the highly-anticipated Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) is underway.

"This groundbreaking today is a momentous leap forward, and I want to thank everyone who worked hard to make it happen," said Governor John Bel Edwards. "I know that this new and improved facility is going to enhance access to education and vocational training programs such as cosmetology, horticulture, welding and computer programming – just to name a few. This new facility will provide more space for these reentry and vocational programs than we had at LCIW before it flooded. That's great news, and is going to help us rehabilitate a lot more women."

"Today's groundbreaking marks the end of a very trying season for both the staff and the females housed at LCIW, and a new opportunity for our state in how we facilitate corrections and reentry preparation," said Department of Public Safety and Corrections Secretary Jimmy Le Blanc. "The LCIW flood brought many challenges, but it also created an opportunity for us to design and build a new space that will help us better carry out our reform mission and transform the individuals we incarcerate."

The \$149 million dollar state-of-the-art facility will be situated on the west side of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center facility. The 938-bed facility features an efficient and modern layout and includes spaces strategically designed to enhance the Department's focus on providing rehabilitative, educational, medical and mental health, and post-partum programming.

On August 16, 2016, as floodwaters encroached on Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, approximately one thousand incarcerated women were evacuated to higher ground. Over the next several weeks those floodwaters inundated the prison, destroying the facility. Since then the state's female population has been housed at various institutions including the once shuttered Jetson Correctional Center for Youth in Baker, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center, Louisiana State Penitentiary and other local facilities.

For six years, the state has worked with FEMA to agree on whether to renovate or rebuild. The Department of Corrections made a strong case with FEMA to rebuild based on LCIW's role as an emergency operations center and the need for the prison to withstand a 500-year flood.

The new women's facility is the first prison built in more than three decades. Raymond Laborde Correctional Center was the last prison built by the state. It began operating in the summer of 1989. Construction on the new LCIW is expected to take approximately 28-30 months, and be completed at the end of 2024.

Freedom Reads Gives the Gift of Literacy to EHCC

Freedom Reads delivered two libraries to Elayn Hunt Correctional Center during the first week of September 2022. Earlier this year, the organization donated and delivered libraries and books to dorms at EHCC and Louisiana State Penitentiary. The libraries are part of Reginald Dwayne Betts' vision to put libraries and books in prisons across the country. Betts founded Freedom Reads with the intention of providing literature to incarcerated individuals in hopes of changing the lives of the prison population for the better. During the visit, Freedom Reads leaders interviewed Secretary Jimmy Le Blanc and EHCC Warden Donnie Bordelon about the benefit of having libraries available to those incarcerated. Other prison administrators from across the country are also being featured in the video. Once completed, it will be shared nationally.



EBR Pre-release Program Prepares Inmates for Life After Prison

23 incarcerated individuals graduated from the Pre-Release Program at East Baton Rouge Parish Prison on August 26, 2022. The 10-week program prepared those individuals for a successful release into the community. A few graduates delivered inspirational remarks to the class and attendees. Each have made a positive change, and are ready to carry that positive energy into society.



Five Years of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative

A Message from Governor John Bel Edwards



Five years ago, my administration and I set out on a bold course to reform Louisiana's criminal justice system. The goals were targeted: address consistent and alternative sentencing for non-violent and non-sex offenders in order to free up space in prisons for those who posed a more serious threat to public safety, strengthen community supervision, expand reentry services, reinvest a substantial portion of the savings into services to reduce recidivism and support victims of crime. Until that time, the state was spending \$700 million each year on the corrections system, had the highest imprisonment rate in the nation, mainly due to sending people to prison for non-violent offenses at 1.5 to 3 times the rate of other Southern states, and high recidivism rates.

At that time, Louisiana was known as the incarceration capital of the world but public safety was not better because of it, and taxpayers were not getting a good return on their investment. Louisiana was lagging behind other southern states that had already made successful reforms. Something needed to be done.

I brought together Republicans; Democrats; Independents; faith and business leaders; law enforcement; judges; sheriffs; district attorneys; advocate organizations and community members to form the Louisiana Justice Reinvestment Task Force. They were charged to study the system and recommend strategic changes. In 2017, I signed into law the most comprehensive bipartisan criminal justice reform package, known as the Justice Reinvestment Initiative bills (JRI), in the state's history. Implementation of the JRI legislation has led to significant progress including a decline in the overall prison population and the number of those who require supervision, increased investments in victims' services and community partner organizations, an expansion of reentry centers and staff, the creation of specialty courts and the average Probation and Parole officer caseload has decreased. Prior to JRI, Louisiana's prison population was more than 35,000 and today that number has decreased to slightly more than 27,000 (the overwhelming majority of whom are incarcerated for violent offenses). To date, savings from the JRI totals approximately 150 million dollars. Those dollars have been reinvested back into the State General Fund, juvenile justice programs, victims' services, community-based programs, and other initiatives designed to reduce recidivism.

Reinvesting a substantial portion of the savings has allowed community organizations statewide such as The United Way of Southeast Louisiana, The Louisiana Parole Project, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans and Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Louisiana to provide more services and fill in the gaps where needed to help those reentering society. Funding has been provided to community organizations in Caddo, East Baton Rouge, St. Tammany, Jefferson, Orleans, Lafayette, Calcasieu, Rapides, Ouachita, Terrebonne, Lafourche and Bossier parishes.

As an example, The Capital Area Family Justice Center located in East Baton Rouge Parish was established using JRI reinvestment funds. The center works with community partners and agencies to provide a safe and welcoming environment for the victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. Community Incentive Grants are awarded through a competitive process to community organizations dedicated to reducing prison admissions and returns and coordinating reentry resources such as reunification with family members, housing, job training, legal services, transportation and vocational training. Reinvestment dollars are also allocated to the Crime Victims' Reparations Fund which is used to either directly help victims or victim's families with a variety of expenses.

Five years after making policy changes to improve our criminal justice system, Louisiana is seeing a better and proven return on that investment. My commitment to making communities across Louisiana safer while providing effective and proven resources to help those reentering society to help break the cycle of crime as well as providing continued support for crime victims and their families remains unwavering. While there is certainly more work to be done, thus far, the implementation of the JRI bills has established a clear and solid foundation upon which the state can continue to build and move forward.

Noteworthy Accomplishments of People in Prison

Jimil Joyner



Jimil began his journey at DCI ten years ago. After moving up from field worker to Deputy Warden's orderly, he co-founded the PILLARS of Life organization. The club promotes citizenship, morality and prepares inmates for a successful return to society. He also serves as the Vice President of Public Relations for the DCI Toastmasters Club and has earned several accomplishments with the group.

Besides clubs, Jimil has made personal strides. He completed an IC3 Basic Computer Skills certification and plans to live with his relatives in Fayetteville, Georgia after his release in 2023. "Everywhere I have lived or worked in prison, I tried to be involved in positive activities and be a positive influence to the people around me," Joyner explained. "It is important to me that I reach back into the prison system to assist those who are doing the right things."

Blake has been rising since he arrived at DCI twelve years ago. He started his academic journey with a two-year auto mechanic certification. Then, he moved on to auto/body school where he earned another certification and worked as a tutor for over a year. After Blake earned minimum-custody status, he enrolled in Ashland University in 2018 and earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Since August 2022, Blake has also performed maintenance for DCI.

"Education is important. I had a high school diploma when I first came to prison. Now, I've got certifications in two different vocations and a college degree," Thompson explained. "When I discharge from prison in 2029, I plan to use every skill DCI has taught me to further my education and find a good job to provide for my daughter and help my mom and sister."

Bake Thompson



Helpful Resources

LA Informational Handbook for Friends and Families of People in Prison



The Louisiana Department of Corrections, with the help of many organizations, creates handbooks to offer advice on navigating the difficulties associated with having a friend or family member who is in prison. You can find them on the DOC website.

[Learn More](#)

You can follow the Louisiana Department of Corrections on YouTube to see helpful information regarding the imprisonment of a loved one, updates from Secretary Le Blanc, success stories of formerly incarcerated individuals, and much more!

[Watch Now](#)



Emergency Resources

If you or a loved one has been impacted by the recent weather events, you can find a helpful list of emergency resources, which includes information on FEMA Federal Disaster Assistance, Mutual Aid Disaster Relief Network, SNAP and DSNAP, HUD Disaster Assistance, HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and much more on the DOC website.

[Learn More](#)

The Louisiana Department of Corrections Social Media



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Louisiana Department of Corrections

Follow us for important updates!

To find more resources that could be beneficial to previously incarcerated individuals or friends and family members of currently incarcerated individuals, you can visit:

doc.la.gov

lareentryguide.com

reentryprograms.com/in/louisiana

reentryessentials.org