

An editorial which appeared in the Antelope Valley Press 03/04 Welcome to my world

I would like to take the opportunity to respond to the article titled "Commissioner: Bring inmate to court," that ran in the Saturday, March 13, 2004 edition of the Antelope Valley Press.

In the article, Superior Court commissioner, Victor Reichman made a decision not to hear a small claims case involving three Correctional officers suing a convicted murderer for injuries they received in separate attacks by this inmate. The commissioner's decision not to hear the case until the inmate was brought to court is not really at issue with us. The core issue that causes correctional employees the greatest concern is the commissioner's comments surrounding the case. Commissioner Reichman made inappropriate and opinionated comments regarding the cases. One statement that causes great concern to us is when commissioner Reichman stated that he "didn't want the court turning into a playpen," with frivolous lawsuits between "GUARDS" and inmates. This statement came at the end of statements to the effect that he believed that the small claims actions were a waste of taxpayer's money and that we were only going to give the inmate a free trip with no real chance of collecting any money from the inmate. In essence, the commissioner has trivialized a case where three Correctional Officers were attacked and injured by a convicted murderer inferring the cases were frivolous. The commissioner was very inappropriate by viewing his personal opinions regarding the case even prior to hearing the arguments and merits of the case.

As a Correctional Lieutenant, working in the California Department of Corrections, who has been assaulted, and has witnessed numerous staff be injured by assaultive inmates, I find the commissioner's statement as a stab to the heart of every employee working in the California Department of Corrections. It's not only hurtful, but also very disrespectful to our profession. I believe that the commissioner should be ashamed by his statements. The facts are real. 9.8 Correctional Employees are assaulted each and every day in the California Department of Corrections. This assault rate has risen over the last few years with no reduction in sight. However, a Superior Court commissioner has the gall to compare these lawsuits to frivolous lawsuits filed by convicted felons incarcerated in the California Department of Corrections. The commissioner is saying that an inmate that files a law suit due to the fact that his piece of cake was smaller than another inmate and the fact that Correctional Officer Herrera has brought suit against a convicted murderer that viciously attacked him and caused him to suffer from blackouts and seizures are the same, is absolutely appalling and makes us seriously question his fitness for the bench. I invited commissioner Reichman into my world. Come inside the walls and have a convicted felon throw his feces and urine into your face and call that frivolous. Have a convicted felon put a shank into your neck and call that frivolous. Have a convicted felon slam your head into a cement floor repeatedly in an attempt to kill you and call that frivolous. Welcome to my world.

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