



**AFSCME Texas**  
**Correctional Employees**  
Local 3807  
“We Patrol Texas' Toughest Beat”



January 20, 2014

Greetings,

As the president of the largest correctional professional organization in Texas I am calling on the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to change the death row plan to positively impact both the correctional staff and offenders on Texas death row. After the November 1998 escape of Offender Martin Gurule, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice engaged in a knee jerk reaction regarding the administration of Texas death row inmates.

Staff incompetency and lack of proper security equipment were the biggest factors resulting in Gurule's escape from the O.B. Ellis death row. As a result of the escape the agency ignored the root of the problem and addressed the lack of security equipment by increasing the physical perimeter security, in addition to the number of firearm rounds issued to perimeter pickets. Lack of staff competency was never addressed in a positive manner and has resulted in a less experienced force securing Texas death row.

The changes in the death row plan following the Gurule escape have resulted in the solitary housing of “D1” offenders who were capable and had additional privileges which could be used as management tools for negative behavior. As a result of the changes to the Texas death row plan, inmates have very few privileges to lose and staff become an easy targets.

The Texas death row plan needs to address tools that can manage positive behavior. D1 offenders who are work capable should be utilized. Housing death row D1 offenders in a solitary cell is a waste of valuable security personnel and money. D1 offenders should be housed 2 offenders to a cell and treated similar to G3 offenders in terms of privileges such as work assignment and allowed TV privileges by streaming over the air television to a computer tablet using a closed WiFi network. Use of technologies such as computer tablets and streaming TV should be offered to offenders who exhibit positive behavior. Lack of visual or audio stimulation result in increased psychological incidents and results in costly crisis management.

Staff incompetency should be addressed by offering death row officers a salary differential and substantially increase their training for staff committed to working death row. A greater pay differential will insure we have the best officers watching Texas most dangerous population. Other correctional agencies have successfully used differentials to address staffing issues. Let's make Texas a model for successful death row criminal justice reforms.

Respectfully,  
*Lance L Lowry*  
Lance Lowry  
President Local 3807