



Letters to the Editor

Aging

Bravo! Bill Finger's presentation to the House Committee on Aging [see article on p. 47 for more] on April 16 was received with practically as much respect and enthusiasm as [former state Rep. Ernest] Messer's several weeks ago. Whereas he is considered by the legislators as a colleague and ex-officio member of the committee before he even addresses them, you've won a position at the table as a participant in the Goals Subcommittee deliberations. They knew from every aspect of your presentation that they should settle for no less.

If you have a chance, please send me a copy of your material so I can keep my counterparts informed. We are all eager to work with the legislators as they strive to focus their efforts.

*David M. Moser
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Vol. 9, No. 3 N.C. Prisons: Old Problems, Tough Choices

I want to congratulate you for your outstanding *North Carolina Insight* issue on prisons, alternatives and correctional policy.

Since the Whichard Commission report was published in 1982, there has been a strong need for an update, a re-focus on the issues that the Commission raised and the General Assembly acted upon several years ago.

Your March issue filled that need at a most critical point in North Carolina's history.

I am hoping that you can somehow continue to periodically look at the issues you addressed and report progress, problems and changes to a readership that is not only increasingly interested in the subject matter, but continually frustrated at the lack of objective information regarding it.

I think one good follow-up story will be how community service work is beginning to be the main punishment sanction placed upon convicted, prison-bound felons. The Intensive Probation/Parole Program, the Community Penalties Program, and "430 Parole" are dramatically increasing their caseloads and are using community service as the selling point and the reference point by which to convince the judiciary and the public that alternatives are beneficial.

I have always felt that community service paved the way for the existing "new generation" of alternative programs by showing the public and elected officials that offenders CAN successfully work in public jobs that greatly benefit the community. Community service is the infrastructure upon which these other alternatives are built.

And I see an ever-growing intent by the judiciary, the Parole Commission, and others to use the sanction as an element in diverting people from prison.

This may require closer scrutiny in the next couple of years as our criminal justice environment forces programs and their goals to change.

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This issue of *Insight* delineates thoroughly all the programs of the state's punishment system and identifies the missing links. *Insight* makes us all conscious of two key words—"comprehensive" and "leadership" We've just bought time with the emergency actions. Now, there is an imperative to act.

*Stephanie Bass
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