

**THE DAILY OAKLAND PRESS** LOCAL NEWS

Overcast, 57°  
5 day forecast

Subscribe

Search

JOB'S  
AUTOS  
HOMES

▶ [Home](#) > [Opinions](#) > Measure targets Catch-22 mess over course required by inmates

Tuesday, May 31, 2005

[E-mail](#) [Print](#)

## Measure targets Catch-22 mess over course required by inmates

Web-posted May 31, 2005

The Michigan Legislature soon will have a chance to do good and save money at the same time.

It sounds like a can't-miss proposition, doesn't it?

Advertisement

But the problem and the proposed solution have been around for most of a decade, with no action.

Now, Sen. Michael Bishop, a Rochester Republican, plans to introduce a bill that would do the trick.

As it is, many state prison inmates sit behind bars when the only thing between them and freedom is taking a course that isn't available to them.

You're right. That makes no sense.

And Bishop says simple administrative changes his bill would enable should result in the savings of \$17 million. In addition, it would ease crowding pressures in the prison system.

Besides, the Catch-22 of being punished for not doing something they can't do must make prisoners more disillusioned and cynical than they already were.

Those affected are guilty of an assaultive crime. By law, they must complete a treatment program for their bad habits before they can be released - even if their release or parole eligibility dates have long since passed.

If it were their fault they hadn't met the requirement, fine.

But the estimate is that, this year alone, nearly 1,500 inmates will have their releases delayed anywhere from six to eight months because they can't show that they've completed the course.

In another bureaucratic absurdity, prisoners nearing release who need the course typically are put in prisons where it is not available.

Another 1,500 prisoners who completed the course still were denied parole.

### TOP JOBS

**[INSIDE VACATION SALES](#)**  
[Outdoor Travel Center](#), located in the Bass Pro Shops in Auburn Hills, is currently seeking qualifi.....

**[ENGINEERING TECH Plastic Trends](#)**, a leader in the sales of PVC sewer pipe fittings is seeking an experienced designer to.....

**[Office Manager Full-time experienced](#)** in subsidized housing. Excellent wages/benefits. Please fax resume to 248-684-9096.....

[View all TopJobs \(23\)](#)

### TOP AUTOS

**[BUICK REGAL GS](#)** 1993 93K mi. loaded, no rust, power sunroof, extra clean, \$2850 248-821-0977 ...

**[CHEVY, TRAIL Blazer LT](#)**, 2003, 4WD, black on pewter, leather, loaded-power, sunroof, 24K mi., \$19,000 248-863-6003...

**[SEA DOO Speedster](#)** 2001 Mercruiser V6, seats 5, low hrs., like new, trailer, \$12,900, 248-431-4847...

[View all TopAutos \(14\)](#)

### TOP HOMES

**[CLARKSTON OWNER will](#)**  
finance huge 3 bdrm. 2 bath \$1999 down \$299/mo. by 48 mo. 810-614-9181...

**[ROCHESTER CONDO, 2](#)** bdrm., 1.5 bath, bsmt., att. garage, Deck, all appliances. \$1100 +

To try to fix that, Bishop's bill would mandate a further review when a parole board denies release to those who have, in fact, taken the course. The idea of offering it is, of course, to reduce the chance of an assaultive offense.

It goes on and on.

Prisoners who are held under extra security aren't offered the course and are released anyway, without having taken it.

You may have noticed that makes even less sense than the rest of this mess.

In the real world, we wouldn't have to pass a law to get this done, but Bishop's would require that prison officials keep track of who needs the therapeutic course and make sure it's available to them on a timely basis, so they don't spend extra time behind bars on our nickel, time the judge didn't even sentence them to.

In an attempt to head off all possible absurdities, the bill also would prevent a gratuitous denial of parole on the grounds that an enrolled prisoner had not completed the course at the time of his or her normal parole eligibility date. Such completion would then be required after parole.

Lawmakers can be forgiven for failing to anticipate the perversity of the prison system when they made the course a requirement.

Bishop's bill would attempt to correct that by telling those who run it every move to make.

But it's hard to legislate brains.

The citizenry will owe the Lansing-based Citizens Alliance for Prisons and Public Spending and the American Friends Services Committee, Criminal Justice Program, for pushing this strange issue onto the legislative stage.

The alliance stresses that "policy choices, not public safety" are the reason for our huge and costly prison population.

THE OAKLAND PRESS

GOOD MORNING

OK, back to work, everybody!

security. 248-656-0718...

[CLARKSTON 1981 14](#) x 70 2  
bdrm. 1 bath, \$7000 810-614-  
9181...

 [View all TopHomes \(8\)](#)

 [E-mail](#)  [Print](#)