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FACT-FINDING NEEDED AT RIVERVIEW

Yet another report, required by a long-standing court order, has found deficiencies at the Riverview Psychiatric Center. The Department of Health and Human Services, which runs the facility, disputes many of the findings and has renewed calls for a new, separate facility for some patients.

To move beyond the merry-go-round of deficiency reports and state responses, Daniel Wathen, the former Maine supreme court chief justice who oversees the state's compliance with a mental health care consent decree, is launching his own fact-finding mission. He plans to soon visit Riverview to observe patient care, speak with staff and review relevant files.

"I'll be looking at what [DHHS] said they'd do. Have they done it?" he said.

Answering this question will determine what must be done to improve patient care at the state facility in Augusta.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services pulled Riverview's federal accreditation in 2013 for reasons that included overcrowding, inadequate staffing and using handcuffs and Tasers to subdue violent patients. The state lost \$20 million in annual federal funding as a result.

In late 2014, Wathen had consultant Elizabeth Jones, who briefly ran the facility when it was called the Augusta Mental Health Institute, visit Riverview several times. She reported that staff still relied on seclusion and restraints too often and that the facility needed more staff. She warned that "there is sufficient reason to question whether the state is in compliance with the consent decree provisions regarding individualized treatment and adequate staffing."

As a result, Wathen successfully advocated for more funding for Riverview, as well as changes in patient treatment.

Jones returned to Riverview in October to see if the officials had addressed the deficiencies. She reported that staff shortages re-

mained, causing staff to work more than 1,000 hours of overtime in both July and August, and that staff hired for specific roles were instead filling in elsewhere to alleviate staff shortages.

She also found continuing treatment problems. Treatment plans were often developed without patient input, for example. Jones was given copies of seven forms labeled "Your Input Is Essential." Four forms were blank; patients had filled out three. Staff also were not sufficiently familiar with new methods for dealing with aggressive behavior.

"Regrettably, based on observation and report, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that staff and class members are sufficiently involved in reshaping recovery-oriented practices and policies at Riverview," Jones concluded.

The Department of Health and Human Services responded that it had only recently received additional funding from the state and that it has implemented numerous changes to better address patient needs. Restraint use has been dramatically reduced. The only real, long-term solution, the department says, is to create a separate facility for violent patients who have been found criminally not responsible by the court system or incompetent to stand trial.

Wathen and mental health advocates are not opposed to such a facility — if it is run like a hospital by the Department of Health and Human Services, not by the Department of Corrections.

However, with or without a new facility, Wathen must ensure that patients at Riverview are receiving adequate care — now, not just in the future. His fact-finding mission should set an important baseline. If he finds that changes are needed, he says he will go to the court with recommendations.

After years of reports citing inadequate care, many predating Gov. Paul LePage's administration, this analysis promises a productive way to identify and fix these persistent problems.

OTHER VOICES

BODY CAMERAS AT THE BORDER

To assure the public of their commitment to transparency and accountability, many law enforcement agencies across the country have embraced body-worn cameras with admirable rapidity. However, the nation's largest law enforcement agency, the U.S. Border Patrol, is moving so slowly to adopt this new technology that it appears not to be moving at all.

In August, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection working group completed a yearlong feasibility study of body cameras at the request of Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske. The group did an adequate job of outlining the pitfalls of having Border Patrol agents wear cameras (resistance by the officers, privacy concerns and cost, among other things) and the benefits (decreased use-of-force incidents, better record-keeping and improved safety of officers).

Police agencies made similar cost-benefit analyses as they prepared to roll out their programs. And while tricky, none of the policy challenges has proved insurmountable. Meanwhile, studies over the last year have found that when police wear body cameras and record video of interactions with suspects, it really does influence the behavior of officers and suspects alike, and dramatically reduces use-of-force incidents. Today, many police chiefs, civil

rights groups and even the president are praising body cameras as an essential law enforcement tool that makes everyone safer.

This made Kerlikowske's announcement last week that even more review of body cameras was still necessary all the more suspect. Was this just a stalling tactic by a department not committed to transparency?

That's the message that groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union took away from the announcement. They are understandably concerned by the suggestion that a law enforcement agency that operates in so many isolated places doesn't want to be held accountable. It's particularly worrisome because the Border Patrol has a history of secrecy.

Kerlikowske says he intends to implement a plan for using body cameras and in-car cameras long before he leaves the job in January 2017 — a plan that addresses the unique challenges of the Border Patrol.

Caution is reasonable. No one would benefit if the agency moved too quickly and spent millions of taxpayer dollars to appease critics, only to end up with thousands of body cameras that couldn't withstand a shift on horseback in the dusty desert. But let's not wait too long; this is an important issue, and the agency needs to move forward on it.

Los Angeles Times (Nov. 18)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rhetoric of intolerance

We saw in September the image of a young Syrian boy, drowned, his small body washed up on the shores of Turkey. The sufferings of the Syrian refugees are embodied in that image. But now we have the images of the attacks in Paris, and the child has become lost.

The rhetoric of intolerance in the name of our protection has begun. And the child, who came with a message of peace and hope, becomes lost.

Susan Reilly
Lubec

Jesus used "mean-spirited" and "hateful?"

Jesus was standing up for the oppressed and poor by calling these men what they were. He was all about justice as he brought their dirty laundry out for all to see. Jesus was not afraid of truth.

I am glad that lawmakers, such as Lockman, are willing to take a beating in order to bring the truth to light and stand up against power-hungry men who place themselves in the political arena.

Mariah Curtis
Pembroke

Lockman's comments

After Rep. Lawrence Lockman labeled Lewiston mayoral candidate Ben Chin an "anti-Christian bigot" in comments on Facebook, many people in this hypersensitive culture were outraged. Lockman's comments were said to be "mean-spirited" and "hateful."

It seems that suddenly some have taken to proclaiming Jesus' teachings. In a Nov. 14 BDN letter to the editor, Janie Phillips wrote that Lockman's comments were mean-spirited and that he should re-read the Gospels because Jesus loved everyone and had compassion for all. Jesus would not be so harshly judgmental. But that's not the whole picture of Jesus. I suggest she re-read the entire Gospels.

This same Jesus one day tore through the Temple with a whip, yelling, overturning tables and chairs and dumping out coins because some people had turned a place of worship to God into a dishonest marketplace. Jesus called these men "dogs," "wells without water," "evil," "generation of vipers," "fools," "hypocrites" and "murderers."

Would she call these names

his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. In it, Francis says "we know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels — especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas — needs to be progressively replaced without delay."

I recently wrote to Rep. Bruce Poliquin, including the above quote from the encyclical, asking what legislation he plans to sponsor or support to replace the use of fossil fuels. His reply to my letter said nothing about actions to replace fossil fuels. As close as he came was this statement: "I will always keep the preservation of Maine's great outdoors in mind when considering every vote."

The other three members of Maine's congressional delegation clearly support reduction in the use of fossil fuels. This is one of the most critical issues of our time, and legislative action is needed. Poliquin should state his position on this issue and not dodge it. Maine's forests and fisheries are at risk.

John Tjepkema
Orono

WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. OpEds may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

Poliquin on climate

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that humans are changing the Earth's climate. Some action has been taken to address this problem. The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 seeks to reduce the greenhouse gases that are the most important factors in this change. This international treaty has been signed by a number of countries around the world. There will be an international conference from Nov. 30 to Dec. 11 in Paris to reach a more effective international agreement.

Climate change is one of the issues Pope Francis addressed in

his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. In it, Francis says "we know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels — especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas — needs to be progressively replaced without delay."

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John Tjepkema
Orono

Middle East 'strategy'

It is only a matter of time before White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, responding to a reporter's query, can be counted on to say something like this about President Barack Obama's strategic plan in the Middle East:

"The president, as commander in chief, has ordered that all Special Operations Forces now in the Middle East, or about to be there, maybe, exchange their boots for sneakers, which will end all this nonsense about there being American boots on the ground in the region. Next question."

Charles Packard
Camden

.COMMENTS

OpEd contributor, Roberta Scroggs, "Katahdin-area residents understand national park idea well. That's why it fails":

What about that mill in Jay whose owner just announced 300 layoffs and it might shut down? Paper industry is stable, all right.

— LÖcke

Jay, Old Town, Bucksport, Lincoln, Millinocket and East Millinocket. Is the Maine Forest Products Council opposing a national park with such vigor because they're failing their constituents everywhere else?

— jrbs97

I respect Roberta Scroggs, but she is way off on this one. Patrick Strauch and Bob Meyers are blowing the same old

selfish horn of delusion, whether a national park comes about or not. To even suggest that this minuscule piece of land among millions of acres will stymie the woods industry is to say that speed limits will kill the car industry; it's patently absurd. This park would be but one cog in a wheel of change that would gladly include innovative woods industries. These stuck-in-the-mud attitudes are selfishly destructive.

— Cecil Gray

This OpEd is way off base in its characterization of the national park proposal. Tens of thousands of Mainers support creating a national park and, of course, not everyone endorses the idea. People have always resisted change. I guess we shouldn't be surprised at an OpEd like this coming from an industry flack.

But it's disappointing. Look what Acadia National Park has done for Maine and beyond. Let's get our boots out of the mud and get behind a great idea.

— Steve Cartwright

Percival Baxter was a visionary who has been celebrated again and again for his incredible gift to Maine, but at the time he was condemned for "locking up land." Roxanne Quimby is in that tradition, and Maine is lucky to have her.

— Words6

It fails because the Katahdin area and the people of Maine don't want a federal park in their backyard or another one in the state. The federal rules and regulations are forever in a park.

— bear run

DOONESBURY



GARRY TRUDEAU