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From the Baltimore Sun

Letters to the Editor

December 14, 2006

Pedophile's release prompts outrage

The Sun's article "Ex-priest released from prison early" (Dec. 9) simultaneously saddens and sickens me.

Convicted pedophile Jerome F. Toohey Jr. is being released to home detention a little more than halfway through his 18-month jail term, in part because, as Mr. Toohey's lawyer argued, prison life has been "extremely tough" on him.

Excuse me for being obvious here - but isn't the whole point of prison to be "tough" on convicted criminals?

This case is yet another tragic example of how Maryland's legal system does far too much to protect the criminals and far too little to protect its children.

Mr. Toohey's already lenient sentence is now even more unbelievably lenient because, it seems, the poor guy just isn't cut out for prison.

But what does this say to society: "Don't bother reporting abuse when it happens because, in the end, the abusers will win anyway?"

Or: "If you're so inclined, go ahead and molest a minor, because you can always cry your way out of jail?"

How many more inmates are contacting their attorneys today, chomping at the bit for a chance to try the "prison life is too tough, so you'd better send me home now" defense?

*Courtney McGee
Towson*

I am beyond appalled that Jerome F. Toohey Jr. will be released



Mr. Toohey's lawyer said that things in jail were very tough on his client. Yeah, well that is what you get. Life isn't always going to be a bowl of cherries.

After all the pain and hurt that Mr. Toohey has caused to Thomas Roberts and Michael Goles he now gets, in effect, a "get out of jail free" card?

Mr. Roberts and Mr. Goles were failed by their school system and now have been failed by our justice system.

And what does this decision say to others abused by priests?

*Kate Glorioso
Towson*

Ensuring the safety of kids comes first

The article "Ex-priest released from prison early" (Dec. 9) dramatically reinforces the need for stronger legislation regarding mandatory sentencing for child abusers.

It is time for the voice of the people to be heard regarding the demonstration of more regard for the welfare of criminal molesters than care and concern for the victims of pedophiles.

We must make certain our judiciary and legislators understand that their appointments and re-elections will depend upon the protection of our children.

Mr. Toohey's original sentence of five years was cut to just 18 months. And for him now to spend only 10 months of that time in jail is a horrible miscarriage of justice.

The release agreement was approved by the judge after the defense lawyer asked him to consider all the molester's good works. So if a child molester has done good in his life, he is to be excused from paying the penalty for his crimes?

Under such a scenario perhaps all prisons can be closed, because many murderers and other criminals have done some good in their lives.

As a people we must rise up and demand justice for the molesters of our children.

How we treat our children speaks to the kind of country we are and above all we must ensure their protection.

*Ann Brentwood
Maryville, Tenn.*

The writer is southeastern coordinator for the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

Why even consider more illegal slots?

The Sun's article "Protecting Baltimore's illegal slots" (Dec. 10) certainly suggests a need for action by city enforcement officers and state comptroller's office auditors who serve as the taxpayers' watchdogs on illegal and untaxed revenue sources.

Most everyone interviewed in the article admits these slot machines are not legal. The Maryland Court of Appeals has ruled them illegal.

So what is the problem? Why is the city issuing licenses for these operations and, why is the City Council considering expanding the number of machines an operator can have?

This is but another example of how gambling continues to plague our society, at the expense of good government and of our citizens.

Don Schroeder

[Annapolis](#)

The writer is bishop's deputy for public policy for the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland.

State must do more to safeguard turtles

In allowing the wanton harvest of terrapins described in "With no protection from wholesale slaughter, the turtle has much to fear" (Opinion • Commentary, Dec. 10), the ostensible stewards of Maryland's wildlife are abrogating their public trust.

The situation is reminiscent of the hunting pressures that led to the extinction of the great auk, helped push the passenger pigeon into extinction and reduced the American bison to a few token herds.

Years ago, I worked on reintroducing peregrine falcons to Maryland, and state wildlife officials showed similar insensitivity, indifference, and even antagonism, to our efforts.

If, in fact, state wildlife officials have ignored the conclusions and recommendations of a 2001 terrapin task force, they should be removed from office and the state Department of Natural Resources should be sued.

And the elected officials who turned a blind eye to this sad situation should be sent packing at the next election.

F. Prescott Ward

Indialantic, Fla.

The writer is a former head of ecology programs for the Army's Edgewood Chemical, Biological Center.

I live in Virginia on the Eastern Shore near the [Chesapeake Bay](#) and feel deeply bad for the plight of the terrapins.

Please run more articles to their plight so that people in Maryland will pressure their representatives to outlaw the taking of the terrapins for food and the pet trade.

Barney Fedeles

Onley, Va.

Clinical evidence of chronic infections

As the letter "Lyme guidelines scientifically sound" (Dec. 9) shows, the infectious disease community unfortunately is largely hiding behind the scientific literature's "evidence base" and ignoring the clinical evidence about chronic Lyme disease patients that is all too evident to other physicians.

Only a few decades ago, the infectious disease community scoffed at the notion of infectious agents causing chronic illnesses.

But we now have incontrovertible proof that infectious agents are associated with chronic diseases. For instance, *H. pylori* bacteria infection causes ulcers; *C. trachomatis* causes inflammatory arthritis; and the Epstein-Barr virus can cause cancer.

Chronic Lyme disease patients are ill-served by the squabbling and territorial in-fighting that is only hindering productive inquiry into this debilitating condition.

Instead, the infectious disease community should take this moment to bring intelligent minds together to find effective treatments that can prevent or ameliorate the consequences of such chronic diseases.

*Sheila West
Baltimore*

The writer is a professor of ophthalmology and epidemiology at the [Johns Hopkins University](#).

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