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OUR VIEW

Our View: Shock incarceration pays dividends



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Crime and punishment is something we're all too familiar with in this area.

We've got our share of crime in Cayuga County, though blessedly less than some other parts of the state. And we've got constant reminders of punishment, most notably the maximum-security prison in Auburn, with its hundreds of inmates and the recession-proof jobs that have supported local families for generations.

To be sure, people who commit rapes, robberies and murders should be subject to lengthy prison stays. They need to be punished for what they've done and the public needs to be protected from them. Many should never - and will never - be released, and that's what places like ACF are for.

But state records show that the "corrections" part of the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision is playing an important role during the time in between some crimes being committed and the convicts released back into society.

State "shock camps," where inmates are subjected to military boot-camp style regulations have a good track record of helping inmates change their ways.

The Associated Press reported last week that among the 45,000 inmates successfully completing shock incarceration, most never commit another crime after they're released.

Shock incarceration isn't about being soft on crime. It's about giving select non-violent criminals a chance to redeem themselves. Those who can't or won't follow the rules go back into the regular prison system. But others learn from the experience and leave state custody with the tools needed succeed on their own.

The state also reports that, given the shortened sentences of the inmates graduating the program, the state has saved about \$1.34 billion since opening its first shock camps 25 years ago.

Turning non-violent criminals back into productive members of society is paying off in more ways than one, and taxpayers should consider shock incarceration as money well spent.

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