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Prison Reform/Jerry Bland

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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

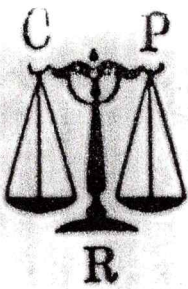
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DATE: July 31, 1992

TO: Jim Gurule

FROM: Richard W. Porter
Counselor to the Vice President

I just met with Jerry Bland last week. He's a private citizen who is motivated to make a change. I think his ideas are worth considering. What do you think?



7/20

Citizens for Prison Reform, Inc.

P.O. Box 22-0217
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11222-0217

TEL: 212-696-3505

(718) 843-8620

July 16, 1992

Mr. Richard Porter
Office of The Vice President
Old Executive Office Bldg.
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Porter,

I am not sure what information you were given concerning our upcoming meeting on July 21, so I am enclosing some material which might be helpful to you.

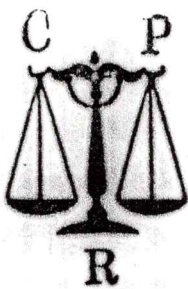
The paper on prison reform was written in 1989. The sheet with the objective, proposals, etc. is a brief overview of that paper. The organization, CPR, Inc. was officially formed in 1990 and now has about 400 members.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Jerry Bland
Jerry Bland
President

Enclosures



7/24

Citizens for Prison Reform, Inc.

P.O. Box 22-0217
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11222-0217
TEL: 212-696-8505

July 22, 1992

Mr. Richard Porter
Office Of The Vice President
Old Executive Office Building
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Porter,

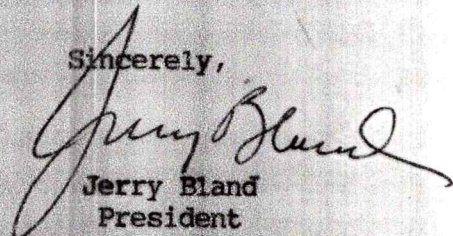
I would like to thank you for making my visit to the White House a most pleasant one. I must admit that any nervousness I felt when I entered your office disappeared quickly because you made me feel so relaxed and welcome. I would also like to thank Ms. Tufts for being so cordial to my wife while you and I had our meeting.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, there is a lot more to CPR's proposals than I could possibly explain in half an hour. In my letter to the Vice President in May, I wrote how crime is destroying so many businesses in the inner cities - and how that, in turn, takes so many jobs from people who desperately need them. We both know what that means to our economy. Look at how many innocent people lost their businesses and/or jobs in L.A. because some gang members took advantage of an unpopular jury verdict and started looting. This is what I meant by the government being responsible for giving decent inner city people an opportunity to earn a living. Only the government can control these criminals who are taking away this opportunity - and the only way it can be done is through an effective prison program.

You mentioned at the end of the meeting that you wanted to show CPR's proposals to some people in the Justice Department. If they are well received, I will be available to return to Washington at almost anytime. I made no suggestions at our meeting as to what I might like to see done, but I would like to make some if you decide to go forward with any of these ideas.

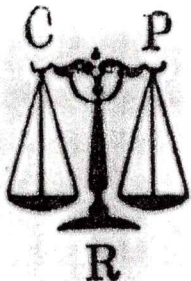
Again, thanks for your hospitality. The tour you gave my wife and me after the meeting was wonderful - never to be forgotten. I hope to hear from you again in the near future.

Sincerely,



Jerry Bland
President

C: Vice President Quayle



Citizens for Prison Reform, Inc.

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Objective:

To make incarceration an effective punishment which will lead to successful alternative and rehabilitation programs and reduce prison overcrowding.

Proposals:

- Step 1 - Remove all amenities and use the space to build more cells.
Result: Increased inmate capacity without building more jails.
- Step 2 - Separate all inmates into single occupant cells: 23 hours in the cell (with reading as the only form of recreation) and one hour of supervised exercise.
Result: Boredom (and the desire to learn how to read).
- Step 3 - Following a minimum of 30 days served, an alternative of home imprisonment can be offered to non-violent and some first time offenders.
Results: a) Reduced cost and b) Increased space for dangerous and/or repeat offenders.
- Step 4 - Build and/or convert some prisons which can specialize in educational, vocational and drug rehabilitation programs. Initiate cooperative programs with local businesses and industries.
Result: A real "second chance."

Advantages:

1. Eliminate inmate on inmate abuse.
2. Eliminate the spread of diseases such as Aids, VD, etc.
3. Create a safer atmosphere for corrections officers.
4. Reduce the "educating" of young offenders by older ones.
5. Allow for shorter sentences with greater effect.
6. Eliminate the need for plea bargaining, early release, etc.

Comment:

Boredom is the only intended punishment of this proposed system. Living conditions throughout the prison should be as humane as possible. The entire complex should have adequate heating in the winter and air conditioning in the summer. Each cell should have ample lighting. It should contain a comfortable bed, a sink, a toilet and an intercom phone connected to the visitors' center. Meals, which will be eaten in the cell, should be appetizing and served hot. Aside from the exercise hour, the only time an inmate leaves the cell is for a shower or to go to the infirmary.

PRISON REFORM - A NEED FOR "ISOLATIONISM"

By Jerry Bland
Co-Founder
Citizens for Prison Reform

The Failures of the Present System

The violence plaguing America today has been attributed to the failures of several areas within the justice system. Among them:

- ... The police are accused of failing to make arrests that they should be making.
- ... Prosecutors will not take cases to court unless they are "airtight."
- ... The "revolving door" status of the courts means that plea-bargaining is not just a convenience, but an absolute necessity.
- ... The people are reluctant to build more prisons. They do not want to spend huge sums of money on a system which is ineffective and has been accused of "punishing" criminals with "country club" facilities; nor do they want them built in their own "backyards."
- ... The prisons are extremely overcrowded. Therefore, early parole is the norm rather than a reward for good behavior.

Throughout history, most prisons have been unfit for human existence. The United States, with its commitment to human rights, has desperately tried to create a more humane system. But in so doing, it has lost sight of the major objectives of prison - and the results have been disastrous. Increasing the numbers of police officers, prosecutors, judges, etc., will not work until a prison is designed which will effectively retain all who need to be retained for whatever time necessary. The current solution of building more prisons and putting more criminals in them is not only a failure, but a total contradiction of what the goal should be. The system which we are about to propose will enable both the police and the courts to work more effectively. It will help to stabilize and then reduce the total prison population. It can do this by:

- ... Proper utilization of current prisons. A prison should house only two types of criminals: recidivists and those considered dangerous to the general population. For all others, alternatives must be found.
- ... Creating a true deterrent. Too many criminals find it better to be inside than out. This preference has to be changed. Prison life must become an unacceptable alternative to freedom for everyone.

The Proposed System and Its Advantages

A prison should consist of standard cells, 8' x 10' in size. Each cell will house only one inmate. It will contain a bed, a sink, a toilet and an intercom phone connected to a visitors' center. It should be comfortable and clean. The inmate remains in the cell for 23 hours each day, with 1 hour reserved for exercising alone

in an area set aside for this purpose. Aside from this, he or she only leaves the cell when escorted for a shower or when sent to the infirmary by a doctor. Meals are ordered and served as in a hospital. There are NO amenities. The only form of recreation provided will be reading materials. Those who cannot read will be offered the opportunity to learn.

This type of prison offers numerous advantages to everyone, including the prisoners themselves. Among them:

- ... Immediately eliminated will be many of the problems associated with the present system - beatings, rapes, venereal disease, AIDS, riots, escapes, etc.
- ... The entire atmosphere will be safer for the guards as well.
- ... There will be no fear of placing younger offenders in with "hardened" criminals.
- ... Without gymnasiums, exercise yards, etc., all of the land belonging to the facility can be used for the housing of inmates and the administration of the prison. Such efficient use of available space will lower the cost of housing each inmate. It also means that there will be no immediate need to build new prisons - we would simply "expand" existing ones.
- ... The increase in prisoner capacity can eliminate the need for early release, plea-bargaining, and "revolving door" courts.
- ... The boredom and distastefulness of such prisons can lead to shorter sentences - with a greater effect in deterring crime than the present system.

Alternatives and Rehabilitation

With few exceptions, every criminal deserves the opportunity to prove that, given a "second chance" and a helping hand, he or she can make good. The system can be designed to accommodate this need.

- ... A number of facilities, some present and some future, can be converted into "specialized" prisons - that is, training facilities or schools. These facilities can be offered to all offenders deemed worthy of a "second chance" after a minimum stay of 6 months in a regular prison. If the offender satisfactorily completes training, the prison, working with private industry, will attempt to find meaningful employment for him or her.
- ... The Armed Services can be used as an alternative as well, but in this case the Service would have to approve the qualifications of any applicant.
- ... Drug rehabilitation centers must be made available for those who commit crimes to support a drug habit. Once cured, the offender may be returned to regular prison to complete his or her sentence. If the sentence is for a long period of time, the offender can be offered the "second chance" opportunity after the minimum six month stay.

... "Imprisonment" at home is an alternative that should be considered for any offender who is not dangerous to the general population. He or she can continue to work or do community service during the day. Then, he or she goes home, attaches a monitored "boot-clamp," and remains there until the next morning. The program would be, in all probability, far more than self-supporting. Part of the monies earned would be used for the basic necessities of all the participants. The remainder of the monies would be turned over to a public fund - to be used for feeding and housing the homeless, building drug rehab centers, compensating crime victims, building new prisons, etc.

... Probation should still be used with most first time offenders (exceptions must be made in cases where the offender is considered too dangerous) - not as an alternative, but rather as a sentence. However, it should begin after 30 days are served in a regular prison.

It is important to note that before accepting an alternative, a prisoner must understand that there will be NO third chances. Violation of any alternative means a return to regular prison for the duration of a sentence. However, as an added incentive for seeking an alternative to a criminal life, all previous convictions should be omitted from public knowledge if an offender remains "clean" for a period of five years after his or her release.

To conclude, the effectiveness of any prison reform program will be directly related to the distastefulness of prison life itself. In the true sense, crime must not pay. The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution declares that a State cannot "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process." Therefore, once a person is "guilty beyond a reasonable doubt," this right should end. The system proposed here is certainly not inhumane, for isolation is currently used in prisons whenever the situation warrants it. Given the severity of the death penalty and the chaotic state of our streets today, I believe that even the courts would not find this system "cruel and unusual."

CITIZENS FOR PRISON REFORM (C.P.R.)

The goal of this organization is to alleviate the overcrowding in a prison while increasing its capacity and effectiveness.

To accomplish this goal, we need to get legislation introduced which will:

1. Remove all unnecessary amenities (gyms, etc.)
2. Separate inmates for the entire day through individualized housing (remove the right to assemble).
3. Remove all convictions from public knowledge five years after release if he or she is not convicted of another crime.
4. Organize prisons into specialized institutions for:
 - a. Housing violent and recidivist criminals.
 - b. Drug rehabilitation.
 - c. Schooling or training in specialized areas.
5. If necessary, amend the Constitution regarding the rights of a person after due process is completed and he or she stands convicted of a crime.

NOTE

As a matter of policy, CPR does not oppose the use of a death penalty. We believe it can be used, not as a deterrent to crime, but as a means of assuring that criminals who are extremely dangerous to others, even while in prison, will never kill again. We feel, however, that the death penalty is more a political tool than a solution to the crime problem, since a humane society cannot and should not use it in a wholesale fashion.



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Home:

156-16 87th Street
Howard Beach, NY
11414

May 4, 1992

The Vice President
2203 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Vice President,

Last July I sent you some information about this organization's proposals on prison reform - and how these proposals could lead to a viable solution of the nation's crime problem. I am writing to you once again because the handling of domestic issues (like crime) may well determine whether or not you and the President are re-elected in November. It certainly seems that the public, now more than ever, is ready to vote incumbents out of office because of dissatisfaction with domestic policies.

Citizens for Prison Reform is a one issue organization. We believe that crime is now the single most important factor affecting the lives of America's citizens - both morally and economically. Morally, people can easily see how they have been victimized. The empty streets at night, the bars on the windows, the house and car alarms, the metal detectors in schools, the flight from our cities - all signs that we are losing a major war to a domestic enemy. But economically, most people still haven't gotten the message. They don't see how crime is costing them billions of dollars and perhaps their jobs as well.

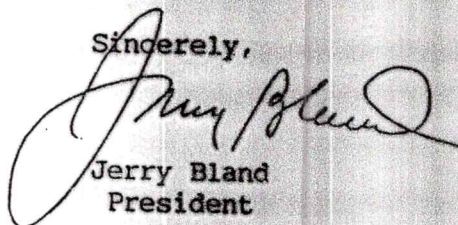
I have lived in New York City my whole life. I am 48 years old. I have seen nearly the entire middle class driven out of this city - mainly because of crime. Hundreds of friends, relatives and acquaintances have been among them, and almost every one of them gives crime as the #1 reason for leaving. This flight removes middle class children from our public and parochial schools - thus taking a huge pool of intelligent, educated potential employees away from city based businesses. When businesses do not have such a pool of potential employees to fill skilled positions, they fold or leave. On a large scale, this can produce economic ruin (as is happening with NYC).

Crime has also driven insurance costs to astronomical levels both in NYC and its surrounding suburbs. In some areas, businesses can't even get insurance. In other areas, insurance is so high that prices become prohibitive for consumers. The result is the same - businesses close or leave - and jobs disappear. On a personal note, I pay more to insure my automobiles than I do for the mortgage on my home. Find a New Yorker who hasn't had a car stolen or vandalized at least once every year and you probably found someone who does not own a car.

I am enclosing copies of a letter and petitions which were just sent to Governor Cuomo. I am also enclosing another copy of the proposals from CPR. As President, I have been invited to speak before many civic organizations. Our message has been overwhelmingly received by every group that has heard it. We don't speak of revenge. We are not cruel. We are not right-wing fanatics. But we do not say things or refuse to say things because they are "politically correct or correct." We speak of moral and economic necessity, and we speak of common sense. Crime must be dealt with - and any political leader who embraces real answers (like CPR's) will be well-received by the voters. Don't let Mario fool you. Most New Yorkers have had enough of his rhetoric, and they are looking for some realistic answers to this problem.

I would like the opportunity to discuss these proposals with you. You can be reached at home (718) 843-8620 or at business (718) 388-6318, ext. 434. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Jerry Bland
President

Enclosures

OPINIONS

A prison whose time has come

by Jerry Bland

The recent uprising at Southport Correctional, the maxi-maxi security prison in Elmira has, once again, unleashed the civil libertarian cries of, "See, if you treat them harshly, only makes them more violent." But, like or not, Southport represents the

only real hope that the prison system has of attaining its true goal: convincing criminals that time does not pay.

Southport is a prison whose time has come. The experiment could be transferred to lower level prisons as well. If so, perhaps criminals who are sent to prison for the first time can be convinced to look for another profession before they end up like those in Southport.

If the experiment succeeds, we can begin to make a dent in the ever-growing problem of our criminal population. Not only are the prisons overwhelmed, but the backlog affects our courts and police as well.

More than 200 years ago, the Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria wrote, "The purpose of punishment is not to torment a visible being or undo a crime, it is none other than to prevent a criminal from doing further harm to society and to prevent others from committing the like offense." Many countries apply this philosophy by killing their criminals. Others cut off limbs — crude, but effective. America, however, is a "humane" society and it cannot subject even its most heinous criminals to "cruel and unusual punishment."

How then, could we apply Beccaria's philosophy in America? Many prisoners' advocates, liberals and assorted libertarians, the answer lies in making prisons as comfortable as possible, sort of a home away from home. This misconception has helped get us to where we are now — with prisons about as effective as Scud missiles.

If anything is guaranteed to those who have to be incarcerated, it should be the right to serve their term in relative safety. Many of our current pris-

ons can honor this guarantee?

In fact, by allowing inmates so much freedom, we have fostered the cruelest and most unusual of punishments — inmate-on-inmate abuse. By keeping inmates in their cells for 23 hours a day, allowing one hour for isolated, supervised exercise, we can eliminate this problem. We can also keep younger inmates from furthering their criminal educations.

Southport and similar prisons can fulfill Beccaria's purpose, and do it in a way that should satisfy liberals and conservatives alike.

The idea behind Southport was excellent. The implementation of that concept, however, was faulty. Prisons such as Southport require adequate staff and facilities. To insure that no similar uprisings occur at Southport in the future, the following steps should be taken:

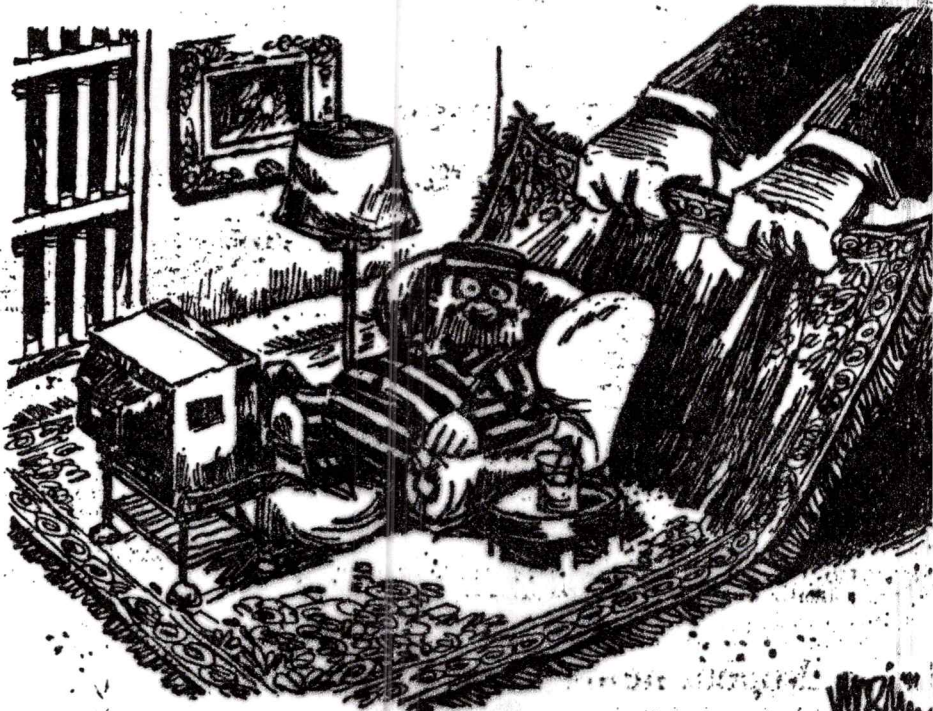
- Restore the 25% cutback in personnel. The monetary savings will come later when recidivism is reduced.

- Make sure meals are served properly. Boredom, not bad food, is the intended punishment.

- Cells should be well-lit and comfortable. However, they should contain no objects that could be converted into weapons.

- The entire prison should be air-conditioned. This expense is necessary to eliminate inadequate ventilation.

- Exterior exercise cages should be limited to one occupant each. They should be sturdy enough to avoid escape (as happened during the uprising.) Blocks with 10 to 12 cells should be constructed with two adjoining corridors in front of them. The first corridor has access to



all the cells, while the second is used for exercise by one inmate from the block each hour.

- Establish a SWAT team of specially trained officers. They can be used if an inmate becomes belligerent and must be forcibly moved.

- Contact visits should be eliminated at first. Visitors can use in-house phones connected directly to the cell from the visitor's center. As time passes, cooperative inmates can gain the privilege of contact visits.

- Expand the reading program to meet the needs of every inmate who wants to learn to read. Within three months of coming into existence as a maxi prison, Southport had received more than 300 requests to enter its reading program. That's almost 50% of a population made up of the most troublesome inmates in the state. Reading can be the first step to rehabilitation. All future programs, be they rehabilitative or alternative, will gain from this.

Systems like Southport can also help with overcrowding. By removing all amenities and adding more single-cell housing

units, we can expand the capacity of the system without having to build more prisons. This first step should allow the system to hold all criminals, including those who rarely, if ever, go to jail now, (like car thieves). A system of Southports would not have to bluff; it would send a strong message, "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime."

Once the effectiveness of the program is established, we can then begin to weed out the non-dangerous, non-repeat offenders, and move them toward alternative programs. One such program is home imprisonment using a monitored wrist clamp. These programs will work because the people who accept them will know what awaits them if they violate the program, and they know we are not bluffing because we have the room to put them back.

For most of those who have to be kept imprisoned over longer periods of time, there will come a time when they will be ready to accept an educational or vocational training program if it is offered within the system. This would now have an excellent

chance of working because the prison will have undoubtedly sent the message that crime no longer pays. And the taxpayers should certainly be willing to support these programs since they can reduce recidivism.

Finally, for those who protest that no matter what, they will remain criminals, there will come the realization that they must spend the rest of their lives in prison cell. For many, this will be worse than death. To all others, it will serve as a true deterrent from crime.

America's prison system has failed those who depend on it most for the discipline missing in their lives — the ones whom it tried to be humane. Southport can change that. Has to, or heaven help us all.

Jerry Bland is a high school teacher and the president of Citizens for Prison Reform in Brooklyn. Some of his ideas were used in the experiment at Southport.



Citizens for Prison Reform, Inc.

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7/30

July 24, 1992

The Vice President
2203 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Vice President,

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss my organization's proposals at the July 21st meeting with Mr. Richard Porter at the White House. My wife and I were treated wonderfully by Mr. Porter and Ms. Tufts, and everyone else we met there was extremely cordial. This says a lot about you because staff members often reflect the attitude and personality of the person they work for.

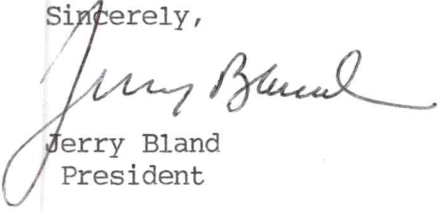
In my conversation with Mr. Porter, I tried to show the importance of finding an effective punishment if we are going to be able to regain control of the criminals in this country. I don't have to tell you how vital this issue is, since crime is near the top of every voter's list of concerns. Along with the state of the economy, nothing affects more people on a personal level. I honestly believe it was these two issues that caused such a tidal wave of people to say that they were ready to vote for Ross Perot, a man who most of them never heard of before. They were convinced his business approach would solve the problem of the economy. But just as important, if not more, they were convinced he would take a very tough approach to the crime problem - an approach many believe can only be taken by someone from outside the political system.

Unfortunately, most voters now believe that the government is impotent when it comes to dealing with crime. You can change that belief. You and the President can tap into that tidal wave of discontent by showing people that you have real answers for their concerns. If you speak to Mr. Porter, I believe he will tell you that CPR's proposals are workable. They are not cruel. When properly implemented, they will begin to attack this problem and allow other programs (such as enterprise zones, etc.) to work effectively. Mr. Porter listened to a segment from a radio program where the Chairman of the Corrections Committee in the NY State Assembly admitted his astonishment at how quickly one of our proposals worked on half the inmate population in the toughest prison in the state. (I had sent you a copy of that tape along with some other materials in July 1991.). This wasn't theory - it was living proof that effective punishment can lead to positive programs - something we have been saying since 1989.

Mr. Porter seemed impressed with my presentation. He told me he was going to show the proposals to some people in the Justice Department. I hope they decide to pursue the matter further. As for yourself, I hope to one day get the opportunity to meet with you personally. I know how busy your schedule is and I am aware that you have other things on your mind, but politically I think I can help you. I often speak to political groups, civic organizations, law classes, etc., and because these ideas are so popular and make so much sense, I am usually asked why they are not not being tried. Perhaps, with your help, they will.

Again, I thank you for having responded to my letters. CPR's membership (about 400 people) will be informed of your willingness to hear our concerns. Irrespective of the NY media, I and millions of New Yorkers like me hold you in the highest esteem and wish you continued success.

Sincerely,



Jerry Bland
President