

6-Apr-24
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Attn: Chief Jail Inspector

Greetings & good hello. I am a federal pre-trial detainee warehoused in Columbus County, North Carolina. I am forming a coalition to assist the local sheriff in resolving issues currently blocking case 5:23 CR-00192-M-RN. I hope little more than a phone call will be required - I am also pursuing litigation under Title 42 Section 1983 in hopes of a longer term improvement for the operations of the Eastern District of North Carolina, but those are unlikely to resolve in time to satisfy the court's immediate needs. Please understand that the sheriff's actions, while well motivated, are extremely costly to the taxpayer, are disruptive to the courts, and ultimately serve no substantive security or penological interests.

Specifically, I need access to non attorney sourced mail - either digitally or via physical delivery. I have offered to fund supplies for the facility photocopier and I have offered to provide the mail in digital form - both offers have been rejected. I have asked for a copy of the facility mail policy, but there is no up to date policy. Some mail is delivered - if I incorrectly label it as legal mail. Personal mail is never delivered. The facility does not provide "tablets" and refuses to use digital delivery. Photocopies of mail are often made if pages "look legal" - this is ok, I need the mail content, not the paper.

The Administrative Remedy Process is dysfunctional. Efforts to resolve the above issues via proper channels, by exhausting the administrative remedy process, contacting state regulators, and filing Title 42 Section 1983 lawsuits with the intention of policy change have been ongoing. The Raleigh office of the USMS is now responsive.

In addition, the communication blockade at this facility has resulted in a severe degradation of attorney/client coordinations. Without "tablets" inmates have no effective access to the law library. This results in approximately 2-4 hours of useful case-time per month, which substantially increases the cost of pre-trial detentions for the taxpayer.

Thus, while I sympathize with the facility's concern about contraband smuggling through the mail, I believe that the sheriff has overstepped in pushing for a total blockade of inbound content. This total effort at isolation not only deprives inmates of access to the courts, it escalates costs to the taxpayers and degrades the function of the Eastern District of North Carolina.

I urge Asst Director Sawyer, Representative Rouzer, and the State's Attorney's office to join together to support this local sheriff in finding a way to deliver case related, non-attorney sourced mail to inmates using any of the many options available and offered.

Thank you,

Eriz Charles Welton