

AL HAVENSTRITE & ASSOCIATES

May 25, 1994

The Honorable William Wayne Justice
United States District Judge
Eastern District of Texas
Federal Building
211 W. Ferguson Street
Tyler, Texas 75702-7222

Dear Judge Justice:

Please do not dismiss this letter as that of some "nut." I retired last year as chief probation officer for the Northern District of Texas. I have worked with criminal offenders for 32 years. I have taught criminal justice courses at several universities and colleges and presently teach probation officers and drug counselors in my private practice.

I am appalled that you would give a hearing to inmates complaining of loss of a softball field. Such action practically guarantees that the inmates involved in the suit will continue their antisocial ways. Having such a complaint investigated is wrong because:

1. It encourages the offender to see himself as a victim rather than a perpetrator of wrongful acts.
2. Knowing it is frivolous, the inmate laughs at the system, guaranteeing a continual lack of respect for society's laws.
3. Criminals see such actions as weakness. It reinforces a pattern of criminal thinking (power orientation) that gets them in trouble in the first place.
4. It wastes taxpayers' money badly needed for legitimate prison purposes.

Many of us who pay taxes to support such ludicrous actions as this cannot play softball. We're too busy working two jobs because of the financial burden government places on us.

The Honorable William Wayne Justice
Page 2
May 25, 1994

Do you want to improve public support for legitimate prison reforms? Would you like to make a dent in the criminal thinking pattern of the inmates who file such suits as this? I would suggest next time you bring them before you in shackles, publicly renounce their offensive actions as evidenced by filing such a suit and tax them the costs of the trip to court. The money should be seized from their commissary funds in the future. Until you and other judges do this, those of us who have chosen to try to help offenders change don't have a prayer of a chance.

Respectfully,

Al Havenstrite

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