

Jan Gaudio
South Thomaston
LD 1941

I am a veteran of 34 years of service in the United States Navy and a life member of the American Legion, Post 34 in St George, Maine. I was part of a team of Legionnaires from the Department of Maine that established an American Legion Post, Post 218 in the Maine State Prison (MSP) in Warren, Maine in 2018. In 2018 prison Post were relatively few. I believe Maine was the 6th state to establish such an American Legion Post. Since that time many more states have adopted the American Legion organization structure to assist and support incarcerated veterans.

I regularly attend monthly Post 218 meetings in the MSP and worked closely with the staff and residents to make the Post successful. The Post 218 officers and members have consistently demonstrated the determination, organization and leadership that has impressed even those that doubted the value of such a program. The MSP Post 218 veterans share the same common bonds of experience and comradery that all veterans share. I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by the MSP Post 218 members and the pride they demonstrate in their shared military experience. They understand the importance of leadership and working together for a common good. Since establishment of the Post, the MSP has created a "veteran's pod" that houses volunteer veterans together in a shared space. The common bond in the pod results in improved moral and has organized itself with noticeably higher standards of performance and self-discipline. The Post supports and encourages education and training that prepares them for the day they rejoin society. The American Legion is part of a network of geographical Posts whose members are committed to help the MSP Post 218 members transition from the MSP and get reestablished in the community.

I strongly encourage you to pass LD 1941 and establish a system of parole that recognizes those MSP residents who are truly making the extra efforts to rehabilitate themselves and become valued members of society.