



Newsletter Vol 2 No 4

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Breaking News!

PA Bar Association Calls on Board of Pardons: “Stop Asking About Juvenile Records!!”

By definition, law is partisan: lawyers represent clients. Where does someone go for a non-partisan view of the law? A November 2019 article in the *Pennsylvania Capital-Star* gave the answer: “an objective non-ideological review ... is limited to one main source — the Pennsylvania Bar Association.” That’s why it was truly seismic when, just this past Friday, the PBA voted overwhelmingly to ask the Board of Pardons to stop requiring all pardon applicants to disclose their records as juvenile offenders. [See the full press release here.](#) This is a reform for which PLSE has been advocating for over 2 years. Stay tuned to see if the Board of Pardons finally makes this change.

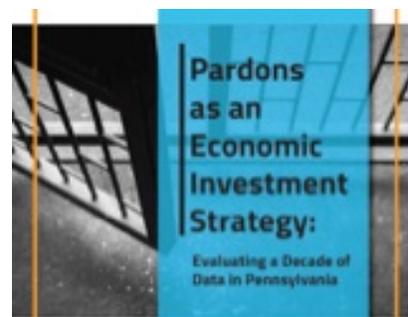
Ten Year Study: Pardons are “good for business and good for Pennsylvania”



**Economy
League**

GREATER
PHILADELPHIA

Late last month, The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia issued [Pardons as an Economic Investment Strategy: Evaluating a Decade of Data in Pennsylvania](#). To our knowledge, this is the very first time that pardons have been analyzed from the perspective of their impact on communities. Among other civic leaders commenting on the Report, Jerry Oleksiak, Secretary of the PA Department of Labor and Industry, said: “This report shows that getting past those



[criminal record] histories is key to Pennsylvania's economic future.”

The report makes its recommendations very clear: “They [pardons] are powerful workforce development tools that can help uplift individuals and communities across the Commonwealth. Expanding the use of pardons stands to economically improve the individual lives of those who were once convicted of crime, the communities in which they live, and the Commonwealth as a whole.” Learn more at economyleague.org/pardonimpact.

Many thanks to [The Lenfest Foundation](#) and Dr. Keith Leaphart, the Chair of its Board, for having funded this pathbreaking study.

PLSE Launches “Lifer Project” With Grant From The Heinz Endowments

“Second degree murder” is the crime that is committed by someone who was engaged in a felony when a death occurred, but who wasn’t personally responsible for causing the death. PA law imposes a mandatory sentence for that crime: life without parole. There are over 1,000 people currently in PA prisons for that crime. Half of them have been behind bars for over 30 years – which is often longer than the prison terms served by those who actually caused the deaths.



At the request of Lt. Governor John Fetterman, PLSE is performing an audit of the second degree murder “lifer population.” The objective is to deliver to the Board Of Pardons objective data by which the BOP members can assess a particular candidate’s suitability for commutation and release. Thanks to a grant from The Heinz Endowments, PLSE has hired [Andrea Lindsay](#) as our Lead Investigator and Mitigation Specialist for our new Lifer Project. PLSE hopes to complete the first phase of the study by the end of August.

Just Released: “Walkies” Episode 2: Solo's Run

Shuja Moore, [our Mike Lee Fellow](#), not only works for JEVS Human Services: he produces films about how people change. **Walkies: Stories of Transformation** is a 5-part series that showcases the journey a formerly incarcerated person has made from what led them to crime, their awakening moment in prison, and how they positively impact their community after their release.



“Walkies” is a prison term for an incarcerated person’s close friend, because the two are often seen walking around the prison together. Shuja introduces the concept and the series in [Episode 1: I Am Not A Savage](#). [Episode 2: Solo's Run](#) was just released this past week! It’s written, videoed, edited, produced – everything including paid for – by Shuja and his friends. If you’re impressed and want to help fund Episode 3, [write Shuja directly](#).

Announcing Our New Website!

Last summer, our vintage (2012) website began complaining and “going dark” with increasing frequency. We posted a “Hail Mary” request on [Catchafire](#) and connected with a volunteer in Silicon Valley, a visual designer transitioning into User Experience (UX) design. She did a simply amazing job for us, and completely redesigned our website! We cannot thank [Kat Lucas](#) enough! Please [visit the PLSE website](#) and send us your feedback – it’s still a work in progress and Kat will be continuing to help us improve it.



Join Our Email List

This Month’s Tip – Make a PDF!

Because of Covid-19, the Board of Pardon has asked that people hold off mailing in their pardon applications until after the Governor says it’s okay for government workers to come back to their offices. But that doesn’t mean to stop working on it – in fact, **take advantage of the time to finalize your pardon application!!!** If you have questions, email us at info@plsephilly.org. And, if you can, **make a PDF copy of your complete application.** This will help you later when it comes time for your interview with the parole agent – and it might speed up the processing time!



Three ways you can help:

1. [Share the Economy League's Pardon Study](#) with as many people as you can! Help get people talking about it and urging the government to make pardons more available. Our #1 objective is to change how society thinks about criminal records and why we help ourselves by helping others get over their pasts.
2. Visit our new website plsephilly.org and [send us your comments!!](#)
3. Help us keep going: make a contribution via [PayPal](#), United Way (Donor Option # 54185), or check!



Want to do more or learn more about the work we do? Write us at info@plsephilly.org or call at 267-519-5323.

Stay energized, optimistic and healthy,
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