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A Thanksgiving plea for clemency

Mary Ann McGivern | Nov. 21, 2012 NCR Today

Over the past four years, President Barack Obama has granted only 17 pardons to men and women -- but on Tuesday, he pardoned his fourth turkey. Worse, I can find only one pardon granted by the governor of Missouri in the last four years. So I created a petition on SignOn.org [1].

We are beginning the season of generosity: giving thanks, giving gifts, giving forgiveness. But our American culture has grown harsh. We have all turned our backs on prisoners. It is time to tell our leaders that we want them to be generous in our names.

A few years back, the Department of Justice finally reduced the disparity of sentences for possession of crack and powder cocaine from 75-to-1 down to about 18-to-1. But they didn't make this benefit retroactive. This past year, Missouri made the same sentencing change, not retroactive either. This is an easy call for pardons and release from prison, both generous and saving taxpayer money.

More difficult are the cases of those who have been convicted of violent crimes, served decades, and are now petitioning for release. The United States imposes long sentences. We've been caught up in a frenzy of punishment. The power to grant pardons is a recognition that errors can be made. I don't just mean imprisoning the innocent, though that happens more than we care to recognize. I'm talking here about our collective inclination to throw away the key.

The elections are over. We are entering a time of grace. Sign my petition. Write a letter to your own governor. Start a petition yourself. Make the call for clemency.

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Links:
[1] http://signon.org/sign/mr-president-and-governors-1?source=c.em.mt&r_by=1335214