

## **Parolee sought help, but was jailed Imprisoned brothers say terms for technical violations are too harsh**

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LAWRENCEVILLE - Four years ago Marty Taylor, a Virginia parolee, had an epiphany of sorts in a toilet stall at a Louisiana Wal-Mart.

Taylor had permission to return home to Louisiana, but it was there he resumed his old drug habit. His 15-month-old son was in the men's room with him, watching as he injected cocaine, he said. The child's stare shamed him.

A few days later, Taylor went to his parole office seeking help.

Instead of treatment for his addiction, he was handcuffed, flown to Virginia, and put back behind bars.

His violations were clear: He was using drugs and had failed to report to his parole officer on prior occasions. But his punishment, he complains - four years in prison - is too severe.

Taylor was first interviewed in early May at the Lawrenceville Correctional Center, where he was one of 3,000 men and women in Virginia prisons for violating probation or parole rules - not for new criminal convictions.

Taylor, 45, knows he broke the rules, and the law, even if he was not convicted of any new crimes. He also knows he has a long criminal record dating to the 1980s. But, he contends his parole violations did not warrant the four additional years in prison.

In April, Taylor's younger brother, Adam Taylor, 42, was released on parole in Texas. He, too, is a technical parole violator.

Twice.

The first time was in 1997, when he was 13 days late reporting to his parole officer. He was put back in prison. Then, when he was last free on parole, he went to Oregon for a welding job.

As a parolee, he was required to have a job, but not allowed to leave the state. He was sent back to prison.

"The thing that gets me about this - the judge sentenced me to 15 years, 19 years ago," Adam Taylor said. "I haven't broken the law since."

The Taylor brothers are bright and are skilled welders. But both have long lists of largely nonviolent convictions and come from a long line of criminals. They are typical of the kind of felons who wind up as technical violators.

In the words of a Virginia criminal justice expert, most technical violators aren't so much dangerous as they are chronic "screw-ups." They have often spent much of their lives behind bars and are not prepared or equipped for life on the outside.

Marty Taylor, for example, didn't know how to keep a checkbook when he came out of prison the first time, said his sister, Laney Efferson, of Denham Springs, La.

According to the Department of Corrections, Taylor was convicted of 25 felonies - including grand larceny, statutory burglary, fraud and escape. The last conviction was on Oct. 12, 1984, in Suffolk. Records show his parole was revoked for failing to report and for drug use.

But Taylor said in May that he was willing to stand on his own feet in the outside world and spare Virginia the expense of holding him.

Nevertheless, Taylor conceded that when his parole was revoked his life was out of control because of drugs and that he was headed for an early grave.

"Maybe," he said, "it's best that they did violate me . . . that's what I needed."

But, he said, he didn't do anything that warranted four years in prison.

Later in May, Taylor got good news: he'd received a new parole.

"I'm tickled to death," he said Friday. He is staying at the correctional center until room for him opens up in a drug-treatment program in Newport News.

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