

John Schneider's column.

## Schneider: Bridge Cards for inmates a short-lived arrangement

**John Schneider** • jschneider@lsj.com • March 29, 2010

On March 11 I wrote about a package of bills aimed at curbing Bridge Card "abuses."

You may have noticed that one of them — introduced by state Rep. John Proos of St. Joseph — would prevent prison inmates from getting Bridge Cards. And if you did notice that, you might very well have choked slightly on your bagel.

Huh? Inmates holding Bridge Cards? Aren't taxpayers already buying every inmate three hot's and a cot?

So, I sent a "What's up with that?" to the folks at the state Department of Human Services, who, I should point out, have been extremely patient with me in recent weeks.

Yes, it's possible, they say, for an inmate to have a Bridge Card. But before your blood pressure gets too high, let me quickly add that it's a short-lived arrangement. Here's spokeswoman Gisgje Gendreau's explanation:

"A person in a federal, state or local correctional facility for more than 30 days is not eligible to receive (Food Assistance Program) benefits."

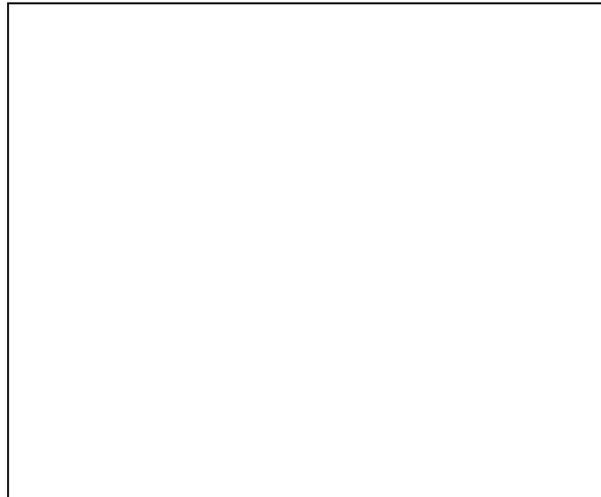
The DHS field staff, Gendreau explained, looks for incarcerated clients in data supplied by the state Department of Corrections and local jails — via the Social Security Administration's prisoner information system.

When a DHS worker verifies that a client will be locked up for more than 30 day, the case is deactivated, and the client must repay all overpayments, if were are any.

Gendreau pointed out that while an inmate may possess a Bridge Card, that doesn't mean he, or she, has access to benefits. The cards themselves don't expire, and may be reactivated.

Read Tuesday's Lansing State Journal for more of

Advertisement



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™