

**LG**inc.

SINCE 1974

# 2018 Annual Report

Published by the Lifers' Group Inc. Board of Directors

**Assist | Advocate | Inform**

Lifers' Group Inc.  
PO Box 43  
Norfolk, MA 02056



# 2018 Annual Report

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For more information on the Lifers' Group, write to:

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**Norfolk, MA 02056**



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## Dedication

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Our second Annual Report is dedicated to the committee under the auspices of the Criminal Justice Policy Coalition which worked tirelessly during 2018 to end life-without-parole sentences.

### **Parole Review For All (PFRA)**

PFRA continued its drive throughout 2018 to bring an end to life-without-parole sentences in favor of a parole hearing after twenty-five years. PFRA has succeeded in mobilizing several organizations and supporters from all walks of life to support ending life-without-parole sentences. The work of PFRA has included: obtaining thousands of signatures on petitions to end life-without-parole sentences, speaking to various groups on the subject, attending meetings, and writing bills to end life-without-parole sentences which have been filed in the Massachusetts House of Representatives and the Massachusetts Senate.

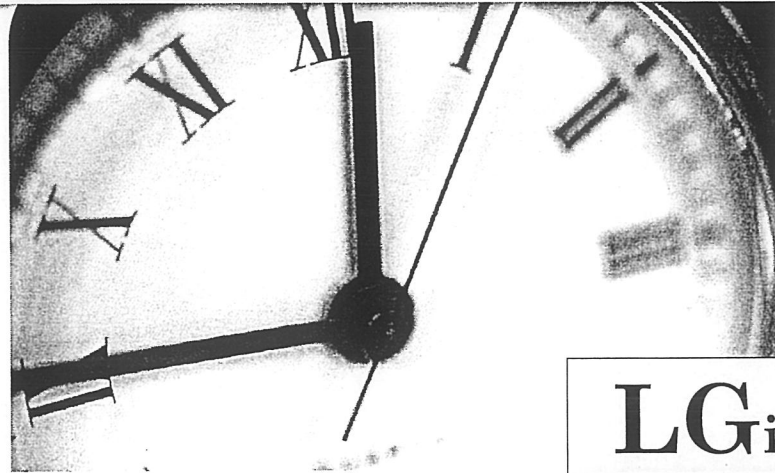
The House bill was sponsored by Representative Jay Livingstone and co-sponsored by more than twenty fellow representatives.

The Senate Bill was sponsored by Senator Joseph Boncore and co-sponsored by several fellow senators.

The Lifers' Group Inc.'s Board of Directors and membership express our deepest appreciation to the members of PFRA and to Representative Livingstone and Senator Boncore for their work toward ending life-without-parole sentences in Massachusetts.



# Now Is The Time...



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## Chairman's Welcome

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This Annual Report is the second published by the Lifers' Group Inc. As noted in our 2017 Annual Report, there is an old adage which I again will tweak a bit: If a group does not tell its story, who will? To meet that important goal, we hereby publish our Annual Report for 2018.

The Lifers' Group Inc. conducts general membership meetings with our members at MCI-Norfolk on the first and third Tuesday nights of each month. In 2018, we held only twenty-two such meetings due to two cancellations by the administration due to "operational needs." Our attendance for those twenty-two meetings averaged **116** members at each meeting.

I would like to thank our entire Board of Directors for their dedication and hard work in 2018, without which the Lifers' Group Inc. could not have met our goals and objectives. Thanks also to Vice Chairman James Keown and Board Member/Historian Neal Parham for their work in preparing the 2018 Annual Report.

The Lifers' Group Inc. hopes that every reader of this report finds it instructive and interesting.

Gordon Haas  
Chairman  
Lifers' Group Inc.  
MCI-Norfolk

## About Lifers' Group Inc.

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The Lifers' Group Inc. is a prison based corporation at MCI-Norfolk in Norfolk, Massachusetts. We have operated continuously for over forty years. Our Board of Directors, elected by our membership, serve three year terms and can be re-elected as long as members vote to do so. Our membership is open to all prisoners, but mainly includes men serving life or long-term sentences (fifteen years or more) at MCI-Norfolk. We have outside volunteers who work in conjunction with the Board of Directors.

As stated in our Articles of Organization and By-Laws, the purpose of the Lifers' Group Inc. is to promote, within the criminal justice system, educational and training opportunities, rehabilitation and re-entry programs, penal and parole reform, family and community relations, as well as legislation and activism in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We join with other groups and individuals both inside and outside MCI-Norfolk, in their efforts to effect meaningful and positive change for all prisoners. We are seeking to reintroduce rehabilitation as the central purpose of the criminal justice system as opposed to the present emphasis on retribution. To that end, we urge that the governor return the Department of Correction to being under the direction of the Department of Health and Human Services.

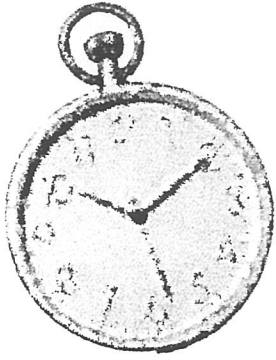
In 2018, to achieve our stated purpose and objectives, the Lifers' Group Inc. published several reports and position papers, conducted educational discussion groups, hosted legislative events, offered presentations on criminal justice developments, promoted legislative change, and encouraged guests to address our membership at our meetings held on the first and third Tuesday nights of each month. Our LGI reports and position papers can be viewed and downloaded at [www.RealCostofPrisons.org/writing](http://www.RealCostofPrisons.org/writing). If and when cited, proper attribution is expected.

The Lifers' Group Inc., in conjunction with Prisoner Legal Services (PLS), publishes a *Parole and Commutation Manual* which is available to all Massachusetts prisoners upon request from PLS. The manual is designed to aid anyone seeking a parole or commutation. The Lifers' Group Inc. also assists interested prisoners at MCI-Norfolk to construct parole packages and to prepare for parole hearings. In addition, the Lifers' Group Inc. publishes a *Prisoner Resource Guide*.

The Lifers' Group Inc. welcomes the support and seeks to work with any person and/or group advocating reform to the Massachusetts criminal justice system. Anyone wishing to join with us or whom we can assist by providing any information we have, need only contact:

Chairman  
Lifers' Group Inc.  
MCI-Norfolk  
PO Box 43  
Norfolk, MA 02056

The Lifers' Group Inc. believes all voices need to be heard, including ours. To that end, we seek to provide input on a par with other stakeholders who work to reform the criminal justice system in Massachusetts. The voices of prisoners need not be the only ones, but as important stakeholders, we should be in the mix on an equal footing with all others. The Lifers' Group Inc. looks forward to being a significant part of the solution, not being viewed as part of the problem.



## Accomplishments For 2018

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Each year, the Lifers' Group Inc. sets aside one general meeting to work with the membership on setting goals and objectives for the new year. The suggestions made by the membership help the Board of Directors determine how best to use the group's limited resources. In 2018, Lifers' Group Inc. succeeded in accomplishing many goals put forth by the membership. Highlights of our accomplishments are listed below. Additional details on many of these items will be found later in this Annual Report.

### **Abolition of Life-Without-Parole Sentences – Ongoing**

Lifers' Group Inc. believes a life without parole sentence is a *de facto* death sentence – death by incarceration. For that reason, in 2018, our group continued and intensified our ongoing push to identify and work with stakeholders committed to ending all terminal sentences. Lifers' Group Inc. believes that all people deserve a second chance. Those efforts by us on the inside and dedicated supporters on the outside culminated in the filing of legislation to replace Life-Without-Parole sentences with an opportunity for a parole hearing after having served twenty-five years of incarceration.

### **Education Discussion Groups – Ongoing**

Lifers' Group Inc. continued to champion the transformative power of education in 2018 through our successful Education Discussion Groups (EDG). The program continued its progress from 2017 by growing from two sessions a month to five sessions each week. Offerings included: Physics, Advanced Math, Spanish, Creative Writing, and Learning About Your Finances.

### **Increase Lifers' Group Volunteers – Accomplished**

For several years, the Lifers' Group Inc. has tried to work with the DOC to recruit a volunteer for the group. Previous attempts had been met with frustrations. In 2018, Mel and Alice Springer joined Peter Elikann as approved volunteers. Mel and Alice have spent over forty years working with prisoners, including lifers, in educational and other rehabilitative programs in correctional institutions across the Commonwealth.

### **Support Outside Organizations – Accomplished**

Lifers' Group Inc. members helped raise money in 2018 to support both Project Bread through the "Walk for Hunger" and the Criminal Justice Policy Coalition to assist in the costs of the drive to end Life-Without-Parole sentences.

### **Establish a Website - Initiated**

Lifers' Group Inc. was asked by its membership to create a website which would allow the group to communicate directly with the public. In 2018, the Lifers' Group Inc. worked to design and to recruit outside support to help manage the site and other outside communication. The work remains in progress.

### **Continuing Tutoring Students in the School – Accomplished**

Lifers continued to serve as tutors in the school. Lifers also tutored students in areas other than the school throughout the year

### **Increase Access to the Gym for Older Prisoners – Ongoing**

Lifers' Group Inc. members continued to request that the Board pursue additional dedicated time slots when older prisoners could use the prison's gym. LGI Treasurer Milton Rice enlarged the plan with gym staff and prison administrators to provide additional time slots per week for older prisoners (50+), whether a lifer or not, to use the facilities in the gym.

### **Challenging the Prohibition of Sending Money From Families and Friends Directly to the Institution - Accomplished**

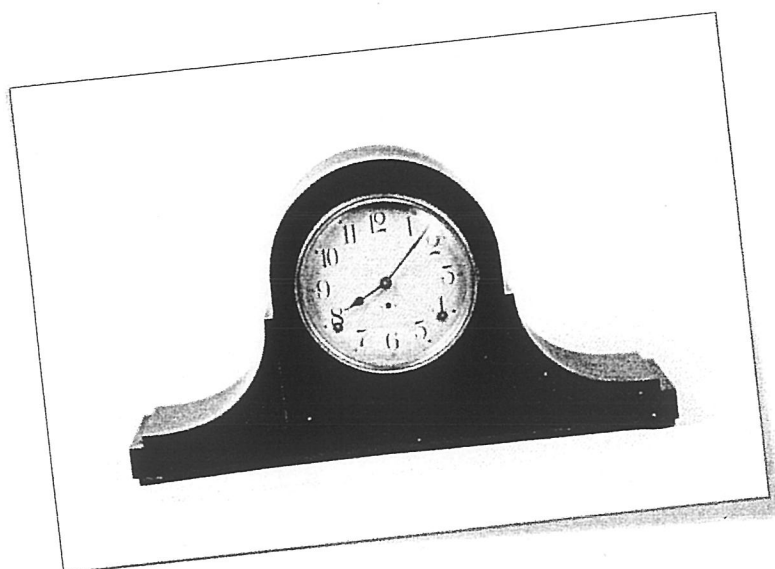
In 2018, the Department of Correction initiated a policy that funds could only be sent through Keefe in Missouri with a \$300 limit per transaction, at a cost to the sender. As requested by our members, the Lifers' Group Inc. wrote to the Central Office challenging that policy and requesting that funds be continued to be received at the institution without having to go through Keefe. The result was that the Central Office approved funds being received at the institution as well as maintaining the policy of having funds sent to Keefe by those who preferred that option.

### **Proposals To Increase Lifer Involvement in MCI-Norfolk – Ongoing**

The Board of Directors submitted several proposals for increasing the involvement of lifers in productive activities in the institution. These proposals included: a newsletter covering events at MCI-Norfolk, painting, masonry, carpentry, and other maintenance work, a Lifers Center, reviving avocations, and initiating an art program. No response was forthcoming in 2018 from the administration.

### **Demographic Surveys – Ongoing**

Vice Chairman Dirk Greneider and Board Member Lonnie Watkins conducted demographic surveys at Lifers Group meetings and other group meeting at MCI-Norfolk to collect data to assist in the effort to end Life-Without-Parole sentences.





## Our Work

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### Life Without Parole

In 2018, Lifers' Group Inc. continued to work with the outside consortium which seeks to end Massachusetts' *de facto* death penalty. As in 2017, the LGI distributed hundreds of support petitions to its members, which they in turn sent to their family and friends in an effort to garner support for the initiative. Lifers' Group Inc. also continued to collect the stories of first degree lifers who have turned their lives around in prison even though they currently have no meaningful chance of release. Vice Chairman Dirk Greneider worked closely with Lloyd Fillion and Nat Harrison on the outside to write a prototype for a bill to replace Life-Without-Parole sentences with an opportunity for a parole hearing after first degree lifers had served twenty-five years.

### Family Surveys

Led by LGI Board Member Lonnie Watkins and Vice Chairman Greneider, Lifers' Group Inc. continued the effort begun in 2017 to administer a series of surveys to help members connect their family members with state representatives and senators. Watkins and Greneider organized the data from the surveys along with listings of Massachusetts legislators by counties and towns to continue to create detailed handouts about the pending criminal justice reform legislation for use by members of LGI and their families and friends.

### Education Discussion Group

In 2018, working in partnership with the Norfolk Education Department, the Lifers' Group Inc. continued to utilize dedicated classroom space in the school building to conduct EDG sessions. LGI provided groups on Financial Literacy, Spanish, Physics, Advanced Math, and Creative Writing. An Introduction to Debate group also was begun in the CSD Auditorium. In addition to the work being done in the classroom, Lifers' Group Inc. continued to create detailed curriculum modules that will both allow other prison groups in the state and across the country to replicate Lifers' Group EDG's and/or allow prisoners with limited access to educational opportunities to learn through self-study.

### Board of Directors

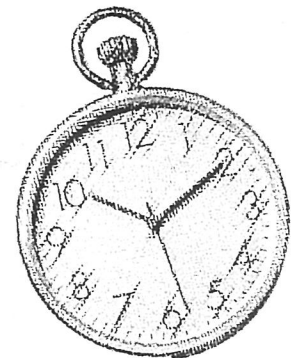
In 2018, the Lifers' Group Inc. Board welcomed Viseth Sao as a newly elected member.

### Mel and Alice Springer

Mel and Alice Springer joined the Lifers' Group Inc. as volunteers in 2018. Mel and Alice attended general meetings and discussed criminal justice reform issues with our members.

### Walk for Hunger

In 2018, Lifers' Group Inc. once again supported Project Bread's Walk for Hunger. Members walked MCI-Norfolk's track to raise money to help combat hunger throughout Massachusetts. Generous supporters on the outside sponsored the walkers by donating money for every mile completed.



## **Learning Center / Computer Lab**

Lifers' Group Inc. continued to help support the Learning Center and Computer Writing Lab in the school building of MCI-Norfolk established in 2017. The Learning Center provides students with a quiet place to study, meet with tutors, and utilize school resources to complete class projects. In the Computer Writing Lab, students can work on papers for classes, learn typing skills, or explore a collection of video lectures on topics ranging from basic grammar to advanced science.

## **Elder Gym Access**

In 2018, Lifers Group Inc. Treasurer Milton Rice, was able to secure additional time slots in the MCI-Norfolk gym reserved for those 50 years old and older. Like many prisons around the country, MCI-Norfolk has an ever increasing elderly population. Older prisoners at MCI-Norfolk often find it difficult to utilize the gym either because they work or because of the large number of younger men who regularly use the gym. The Lifers' Group Inc. continues to believe that access to regular physical activity is an important part of living a healthy lifestyle.

## **Treasurer's Reports**

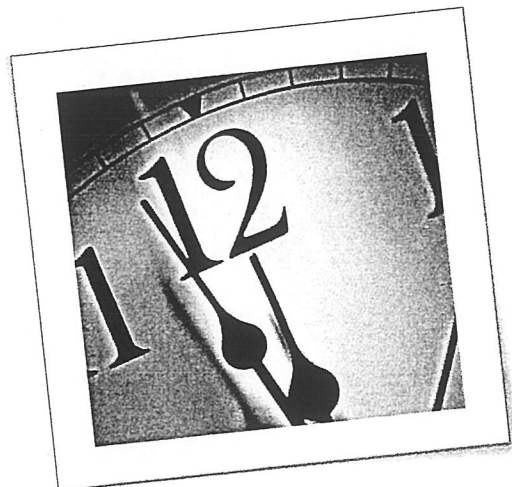
In the continued effort by the Lifers' Group Inc. to be transparent, Treasurer Milton Rice presented financial information at the first meeting of every month regarding how much money had been taken in and where the funds had been spent with ending balances for each previous month. Treasurer Rice also collected donations from members at each meeting.

## **Thoughts For The Night**

Board Member Rafael Martinez opened each general meeting with a poignant Thought For The Night which related to the efforts of the Lifers' Group on behalf of our members and to encourage members to reach higher and further in their dealing with serving a life sentence in Massachusetts.

## **Postings**

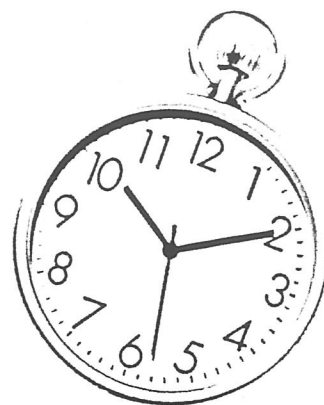
Vice Chairmen Dirk Greneider and James Keown, along with Board Member Daniel Holland composed and posted monthly notices of upcoming events and guests, agenda items for future meetings, and informational postings regarding Lifers' Group issues, particularly the drive to end Life-Without-Parole sentences.



## Guests

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The Lifers' Group Inc. is always honored to welcome outside guests to our regular monthly meetings on the First and Third Tuesdays of each month and to our twice monthly Board meetings on Saturday mornings. In 2018, a number of people joined us at MCI-Norfolk, including:



### **Governor Michael and Kitty Dukakis**

Governor Dukakis and his wife Kitty met with our general membership on one Tuesday night. They discussed and answered questions about the history and future of criminal justice reform in Massachusetts and dealing with depression.

### **Senator William Brownsberger**

Senator William Brownsberger spoke to the Lifers' Group Inc. general membership about proposed legislation to implement recommendations from the Criminal Justice Reinvestment Plan based upon the multi-year study conducted by the Pew Charitable Trust and the Center on State Governments.

### **Nat Harrison and Lloyd Fillion**

Mr. Fillion and Mr. Harrison are working in conjunction with the Criminal Justice Policy Coalition to pull together individuals and organizations seeking to abolish Life-Without-Parole in Massachusetts. Mr. Harrison and Mr. Fillion spoke with the general membership before meeting the Board of Directors to provide updates on the push to end Massachusetts' *de facto* death sentence.

### **Harvard PLAP**

The Lifers' Group Inc. has worked with Harvard University's Prisoner Legal Assistance Program for many years. In 2018, students from Harvard PLAP, along with Supervising Attorney Joel Thompson, spoke at a Lifers' Group Inc. general meeting about the organization's services. The student attorneys also took several questions from the membership.

### **Judge Nancy Gertner, Attorney John Reinstein, and Harvard Law Students**

Former Federal District Court Judge Nancy Gertner brought her Harvard Law School to attend a LGI general meeting. Judge Gertner and Attorney John Reinstein addressed the membership on sentencing issues. After their presentations, the general membership, the students, Judge Gertner, and Attorney Reinstein divided into small groups to discuss various criminal justice issues.

### **Erica Cushna**

Erica Cushna from the Committee for Public Services (CPCS) spoke to the members regarding the work she and others at CPCS have been doing for juveniles in prison. Ms. Cushna's primary responsibility is to provide services for juveniles serving prison sentences, including lifers. Several of our members who had been convicted as juveniles or only months prior to their conviction had turned 18 years of age shared their situations with Ms. Cushna.



## Meeting Presentations

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Throughout the year, the Lifers' Group Inc. prepared several educational presentations for general membership meetings. In addition, LGI Board Members facilitated a number of seminars which looked deeper into subjects the membership found important. In 2018, our presentations and seminars included:

### **Legal Developments**

Vice Chairman Dirk Greineder led a series of presentations focused on developing case law and new policies to help members better understand how legal changes might impact them.

### **Legislation**

Lifers' Group Inc. provided members with regular updates on pending legislation and analyses on how the bills might impact lifers and long-termers. In addition, LGI worked to connect each member with the state representative and state senator that represented the member's family. LGI also developed surveys and sample postcards to help with this work.

### **Parole Decisions for 2017**

For the eleventh year, Lifers' Group Inc. led a research study that analyzed the parole process for 2<sup>nd</sup> degree adult lifers and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree juvenile lifers. LGI Chairman Haas and Board Member George MaGrath presented the group's findings to the general membership.

### **DOC Expenditure and Staffing**

In 2018, Lifers' Group Inc. continued to use public records requests to investigate how the Massachusetts DOC used its budget. The Expenditure and Staffing presentation shed light on the department's shifting priorities.

### **DOC Institutional Fact Cards**

Twice a year, the DOC releases its Institutional Fact Cards that provides population data from each of the institutions operated by the department. LGI analyzed the department's data and presented the group's findings to the membership.

### **Norfolk Z-1 Account**

The Norfolk Inmate Benefit Fund, or Z-1 Account, is funded through commissions earned on canteen and property sales. The fund was established to help cover expenditures that benefit the prisoner population. Each year, Lifers' Group Inc., in conjunction with the Norfolk Inmate Council Store & Finance Committee, conducts a review of the Z-1 account. The 2018 report was presented to the membership at a general meeting.

### **DOC Central Inmate Accounts**

In addition to the Z-1 Account, Lifers' Group Inc. reviews the department's three central inmate accounts. Our 2018 report continued to highlight that more than \$2.5 million was left in these three accounts. As with 2017, \$1.9 million was in the department's Central Library Fund alone. The fund was originally established to finance a long completed upgrade to all of the DOC's law libraries. A presentation on the review was made to the group's membership.

### **Recognizing Graduates**

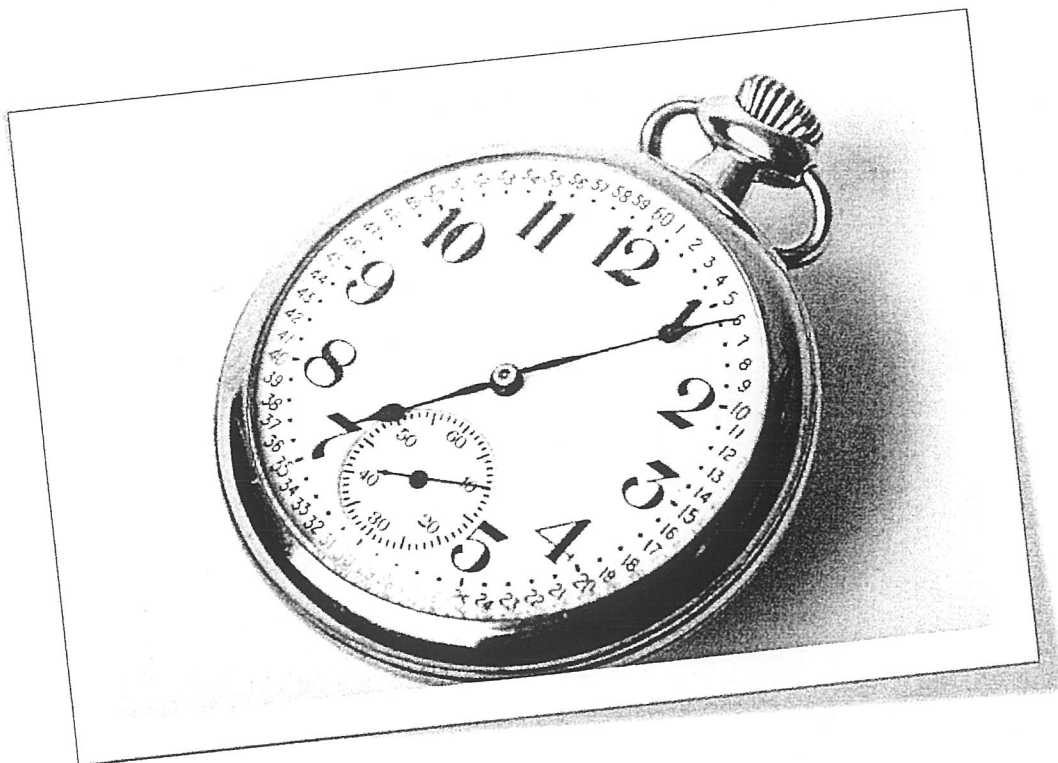
In 2018, Vice Chairman James Keown acknowledged the individual lifers who had graduated from the Boston University Prison Program and from the MCI-Norfolk educational and vocational programs.

### **Parole Recognition Day**

In 2018, Board Member Russell Regan noted those lifers who had been approved for paroles and discussed efforts by the Lifers' Group Inc. to assist lifers to prepare parole packages and to appear before the Parole Board for parole hearings. A general meeting was dedicated to celebrating lifers at MCI-Norfolk who had been granted paroles in 2018.

### **Public Records Law**

Chairman Gordon Haas presented a discussion of the Massachusetts' Public Records statutes and regulations. The purpose of the presentation was to inform members of the value of Public Records requests and how to file such requests with the DOC and any other public agency. The Lifers' Group utilized Public Records Requests frequently in 2018 to obtain data from the Department of Correction and the Parole Board to complete the numerous reports produced by the Lifers' Group Inc. in 2018.



## Published Reports

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Each year, Lifers' Group Inc. develops a number of original reports that are published in hard copies and online. Full versions of all LGI reports are available for download at [www.realcostofprisons.org/writing](http://www.realcostofprisons.org/writing). In 2018, the Lifers' Group published the following reports:

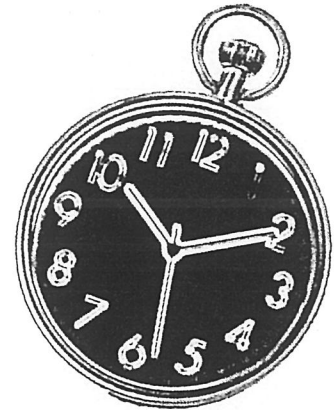
- *Parole Decisions for Lifers 2017*
- *Department of Correction Expenditures & Staffing Levels*
- *Department of Correction Institutional Fact Cards*
- *Department of Correction Central Inmate Accounts*

## Published Articles

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Lifers' Group Inc. Board Members are regular contributors to publications around the country. In 2018, the following articles were published by our Board Members:

- ❖ *"Life" Is A Death Sentence*
- ❖ *Mass(achusetts) Incarceration of the Elderly, in the Journal of Prisoners on Prisons, (Spring 2018)*



## Guides and Manuals

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In 2018, Lifers' Group Inc. completed the update of its popular *Parole and Commutation Manual*. The publication is available to all Massachusetts prisoners through Prisoner Legal Services. The manual is designed to assist those preparing to go before the Parole Board or who are preparing commutation packages.

The Lifers' Group Inc. also completed its first *Prisoner Resource Guide* which is designed to serve as a quick reference for prisoners to connect with many of the organizations Lifers' Group Inc. has worked with through the years.

## In Memoriam

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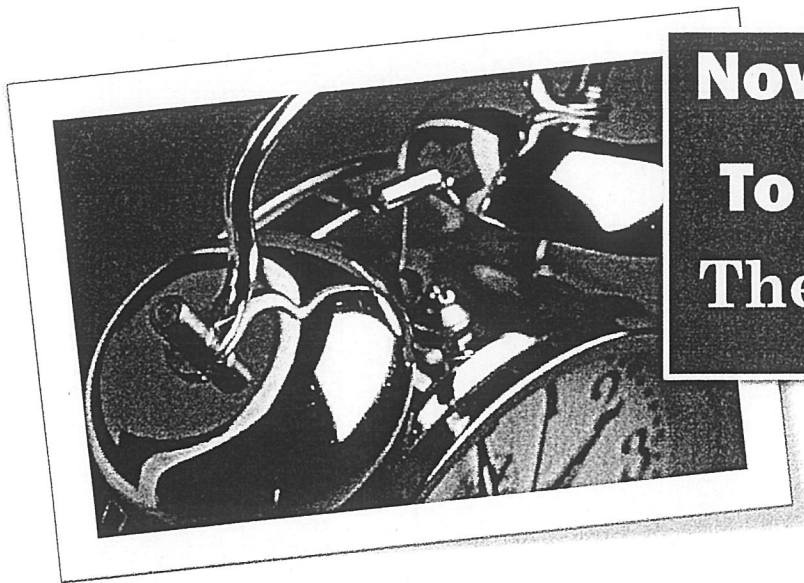
In 2018, the following **nineteen** lifers died while incarcerated:

### **2018 In Memoriam**



<b>Julius Bowles</b>	<b>Robert “Bobby” Mains</b>
<b>Joseph Callahan</b>	<b>George Nassar</b>
<b>Augustus Costa</b>	<b>John Poe</b>
<b>Michal Forte</b>	<b>Lucille Reid</b>
<b>Gary Guess</b>	<b>Albert Rogers</b>
<b>Roger Herbert</b>	<b>Kevin Sullivan</b>
<b>Ronald Johnson</b>	<b>Clint Tefts</b>
<b>Edward Julian</b>	<b>Michael Tuitt</b>
<b>James Lattimore</b>	<b>Muangi Wambuko</b>
<b>Donald Lennon</b>	

Each person was individually remembered with a moment of silence at a Lifers' Group General Meeting. On the last general meeting of 2018, the names of all lifers known to the Lifers' Group who had died in prison were read as our membership stood in silence. The list totaled **314** lifers.



**Now Is The Time...  
To Connect With  
The Lifers Group**

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For more information about anything listed  
in this Annual Report, contact:

Chairman  
Lifers' Group Inc.  
PO Box 43  
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