

Lenell Nussbaum
President

Teresa Mathis
Executive Director

October 16, 1996

Mr. Chase Riveland, Secretary
Department of Corrections
P. O. Box 41101
Olympia, WA 98504-1101

RE: Personal Computer Usage by Department of Corrections' Prisoners

Dear Secretary Riveland:

We have followed with interest and concern the fact that the WSR computer pilot project has ended in the conclusion that all personally-owned computers are to be removed from the respective prisoner's use.

Based on the information we have about this much-publicized decision, there does not seem to be a good basis for it. The computers are purchased personally by the individual prisoner; there have been no tort claims resulting from the personal computers being in the prisons; there have been no breaches of security resulting from the computers being in the prison; and there are alternative, available methods to monitor the use of the computers, which do not require additional staffing.

The other concern we have, which is perhaps the most important concern for the citizens of the State of Washington, is that with the severely limited resources available to the Department of Corrections for prisoners to access to assure their return to society at a lesser risk than when they were first incarcerated, it seems that the use of computers would be one of the most valuable tools for the Department of Corrections. In particular, since the educational opportunities for prisoners beyond a GED is now not guaranteed to the general population, computers could be used by prisoners not only to learn computer skills but also as an educational tool for their self-taught education.

While we acknowledge that the current sentencing system does not imprison to "rehabilitate," we agree with your statement that the Department of Corrections' goal is still to provide opportunities for prisoners to "reform" so that when they are returned to society, as the majority of prisoners will be, they will pose no risk to the community. Therefore, it is not logical to remove computers, which are a tool of education and reform and have proven to be of no liability to the Department of Corrections.

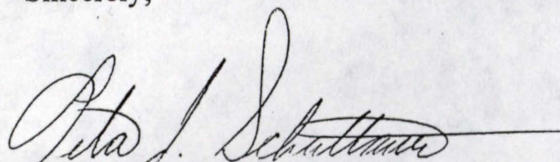
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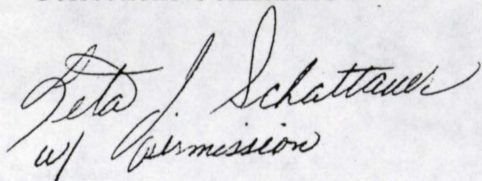
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Please reconsider the removal of the computers at WSR and consider an extension of this very successful computer program to prisoners in other institutions within the DOC. Thank you.

Sincerely,



LETA J. SCHATTAUER, Co-Chair
Corrections Committee



for JOHN MIDGLEY, Co-Chair
Corrections Committee

LJS:jam

cc: Paul Wright
Senator Jeanne Kohl
Representative Mary Lou Dickerson
Representative Frank Chopp
Governor Mike Lowry
Senator Jim Hargrove