

Officials pull plug on "Mister Coffee Bean" program

Monday, March 14, 2022

A program which would have trained and placed convicted felons in elementary schools is dead before it started in Caddo Parish after Sheriff Steve Prator warned the school board, Louisiana Sheriff's Association (LSA), legislators and the public.

"I had to do all I could to put a stop to something that would have placed young children at risk," said Sheriff Prator.

In February, the Louisiana Department of Corrections asked officials with the Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office to identify Caddo Correctional Center inmates for the "Mister Coffee Bean" program. The program was designed to educate a select number of felony inmates. The inmates, upon graduation, would then be certified and placed into elementary schools as certified teachers.

Upon receiving the request, Sheriff Prator swiftly notified the Caddo Parish School Board, the LSA, legislators and the public about the program. The sheriff said his participation in "Mister Coffee Bean" would have been against his sworn duty to serve and protect.

"I'm all for reducing recidivism," said the sheriff. "In fact, we have helped more than six thousand inmates graduate from our re-entry program. But our children are too precious to be part of an experimental initiative. Protecting our children must remain a priority."

On March 11, Secretary James Le Blanc of the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections informed the LSA that it will discontinue the "Mister Coffee Bean" program throughout the state due to concerns brought up by the LSA and numerous legislators.

"I am relieved state officials listened and pulled the plug on this program," said Sheriff Prator.

Attachments

Department of Public Safety & Corrections
State of Louisiana
Secretary's Office

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



JAMES M. LE BLANC
SECRETARY

March 11, 2022

Mr. Michael Ranatza, Executive Director
Louisiana Sheriffs' Association
1175 Nicholson
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Mr. Ranatza:

I am writing to inform you, that based upon the concerns recently expressed to me by yourself and several members of the legislature, I have decided not to proceed with the creation of the Coffee Bean Pilot program.

While I still stand by my support of the purpose and goals of this small project, I in no way want to jeopardize the critical initiatives currently in place, in partnership with the sheriffs and the legislature, to reform the criminal justice system and improve public safety in our state. Initiatives such as the continued expansion of reentry, vocational, and educational programs in Louisiana jails and state prisons through the reinvestment of savings generated by the 2017 reform package which are critical to reducing recidivism and helping people successfully return to families and communities.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,


James M. Le Blanc
Secretary

cc:

Assistant Secretary DPS&C/Rhett Covington
Executive Counsel DPS&C/Natalie LaBorde
Warden EHCC/ Kurt Guerin
President De A Coffee Bean Foundation/Damon West
Chairman Senate Committee on Finance/ Bodi White

P. O. Box 94304 ♦ Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9304 ♦ (225) 342-6740 ♦ Fax (225) 342-3005 ♦ www.dps.la.gov
An Equal Opportunity Employer