

2026 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

LEWISBURG PRISON PROJECT

"RETURNING VIOLENCE FOR VIOLENCE MULTIPLIES VIOLENCE, ADDING DEEPER DARKNESS TO A NIGHT ALREADY DEVOID OF STARS." -MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE from Angela Trop

Greetings,

As I searched for a quote to open this year's annual newsletter, these words by Dr. King kept returning to me. The world often feels incredibly harsh right now. Yet, I am constantly reminded that you—the supporters of the Lewisburg Prison Project—are a vital beacon of light. Together, we must unite to provide hope during these difficult times.

While we are deeply disturbed by how the death penalty is treated as public theater in this country, and disheartened by the mass incarceration of our immigrant neighbors, we remain steadfast in our mission.

Inside this issue, you will meet several individuals whose lives you have touched. A federal inmate shares what your support means to him, along with a poem he wrote. You will also meet our newest board member, and join us in thanking those who have completed their service. Please join us in congratulating our Patten Award winner and reading about how we are putting the generosity of Isabelle and Karl Patten to work.

The LPP remains committed to providing support or a resource for every single letter we receive from an incarcerated individual. Looking forward, our board is eager to expand our impact by educating the public and influencing Congress. This fall we partnered with Bucknell University to host an immigration rights attorney who provided insight into inhumane practices endured in immigrant detention centers. Additionally, we have contracted with an established prisoner civil rights attorney to assist our efforts to effect change in policy.

Thank you for being the light that guides this work.

In solidarity,
Angela Trop

This issue:

President's Message
PAGE 1

Legal Expertise
PAGE 3

Welcome & Farewell to LPP Board Members
PAGE 2

Inside the Black Hole: A Public Talk with Attorney Sarah Decker
PAGE 3

LPP Financial Update
PAGE 4

Annual Party & Award
PAGE 5

Support in Detention
PAGE 6

By The Numbers & Our Volunteers
PAGE 7

Welcome & Farewell to LPP Board Members - Deirdre O'Connor

During her many years in higher education, new board member Denise Davidson taught graduate students how to work with college students in outside-the-classroom settings, teaching that was inspired in part by her earlier work in academic advising, campus housing, and student conduct. This educational work also enabled her to become familiar with legal issues. Her interest in the law, along with Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah's dystopian prison novel, Chain Gang All Stars, and WVIA's film, "Hometown Lewisburg", which highlighted LPP, inspired her to join LPP's board.

Denise observes that "all people, no matter their status, have rights" and that LPP "knows this... and is doing something about it for incarcerated people."

Denise brings her organizational skills and her experience as an educator to the board. One of her goals is to expand volunteer opportunities, including possible student internships. Since our all-volunteer board and single part-time employee can only accomplish so much, we are very excited to work with Denise in expanding opportunities for community members to support LPP's work.



Denise Davidson

Three board members have also recently departed from their roles. Marty Ligare, one of our longest-serving board members, served as board president for a number of years. A retired physics professor, he and his wife have relocated to the Boston area to be closer to their son. Jennifer Thomson and Erica Delsandro, both also Bucknell faculty members, also recently departed from their roles on the board.

We offer huge thanks to Marty, Jennifer, and Erica for their contributions to LPP over the years. We will miss them!



Current LPP Board (L to R): Elayne Sobel, Kim Daubman, Denise Davidson, Ben Vollmayr-Lee, Angela Trop, Laura Lanwermeyer, Deirdre O'Connor, with LPP Coordinator Carol Pavlick. Not pictured: Steve Becker, Dave Sprout.

PRISON FACTS

- **The Federal Bureau of Prisons closed 6 facilities in 2026 due to a backlog of $4 billion in deferred maintenance and a shortage of correctional officers. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections closed 2 facilities that required almost $80 million in upgrades.**
- **There are 137,000 inmates in Federal prisons, across 118 facilities.**
- **In Pennsylvania there are 40,000 inmates in 23 state facilities.**

Jennifer Tobin's Legal Expertise - Angela Trop

Providing a response and robust resources to every inmate letter will always be at the heart of the LPP. We are incredibly thankful to our coordinator, Carol Pavlick, for executing this mission so well. As a volunteer board eager to expand our advocacy, we have encountered significant obstacles to enacting positive change within carceral spaces. Realizing we needed the expertise of a seasoned attorney to guide our efforts, we are thrilled to announce that attorney Jennifer Tobin has contracted with us to provide strategic research and guidance.

Jennifer brings an impressive and deeply relevant background to this role. In the Third Circuit (Philadelphia), she began her career handling civil rights, employment discrimination, and benefits claims under the Black Lung Benefits and Social Security Acts. She worked for the Philadelphia Civil Rights Unit as an Assistant City Solicitor. The LPP met Jennifer when she worked for the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, where she dedicated her time to defending the rights of incarcerated people. Since 2014, she has run her own practice, Tobin Law Office, focusing on civil rights, post conviction, and veterans benefits issues.

A few of the ways Jennifer will help the LPP include: helping us influence legislatures to create and support impactful bills; engaging with institutional wardens to request assistance and systemic cooperation; and educating the public to mobilize citizens and build community support.

Over the past six months, Jennifer has already become an asset to the board. She has researched strategies for policy change, provided insights into court rulings and legal agreements, and vetted the validity of specific resources. You might remember that Jennifer is also updating the LPP legal bulletins. The LPP is proud to expand our relationship with such a dedicated expert in the field as we step into this next chapter of advocacy.

We are fortunate to have access to Jennifer's wealth of knowledge and experience.

Inside the Black Hole: A Public Talk by Attorney Sarah Decker - Elayne Sobel

On September 1, 2026, the Lewisburg Prison Project co-sponsored a presentation by Sarah Decker at Bucknell University. Sarah graduated from Bucknell in 2017 and the Georgetown University Law Center in 2020. Currently, Sarah is a senior staff attorney on the U.S. Advocacy & Litigation team at the Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center, where she litigates to expose systemic human rights abuses at the intersection of the criminal legal and immigration systems. Under the leadership of community organizers, her research and advocacy contribute to movements to abolish immigrant incarceration, end border policies that criminalize and abuse migrants, and bring back people deported to harm in the racially discriminatory deportation machine. Sarah's presentation was entitled "Inside the Black Hole: Systemic Human Rights Abuses Against Immigrants Detained in ICE Detentions."

The audience of nearly 200 people learned disturbing facts about medical neglect and an alarming rise in deaths in detention: 61 immigrants have died in detention since January 2025. Sarah described detainees' experiences of physical and sexual abuse across our country. She also detailed the particularly dangerous situation that exists in Louisiana, which has nine detention centers scattered around a military airport. Detainees are plucked from one place and end up in Louisiana, where their families are unable visit; sometimes families and attorneys have no idea where the person has been taken. There is little oversight except for that provided by a few groups, including the Kennedy Human Rights Center, that are working to use a variety of legal maneuvers to fight for justice for those who have been disappeared.

LPP board members were excited to welcome Sarah back to town and were excited to co-sponsor her visit with Arabic Studies; Community Engaged Leadership, Learning & Research; International Relations; the Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies Program; Philosophy; Psychology; Women's and Gender Studies; the Writing Center; and the SUN Immigrant Community Support. We are all so grateful for Sarah's ongoing work in this area.

LPP Financial Update - Ben Vollmayr-Lee

Thanks to the generous donations of our supporters over the years, the Lewisburg Prison Project (LPP) continues to have the financial means to make a meaningful impact both here in Central Pennsylvania and nationwide. While we no longer maintain a brick-and-mortar office, this transition has freed up vital funds. It enables us to retain our estimable LPP Coordinator, Carol Pavlick, and secure the services of our affiliated attorney, Jennifer Tobin. Jennifer provides general legal counsel and regularly updates our legal bulletins, which are utilized by incarcerated individuals across the country. Our fully remote office functions with high efficiency, and we are proud to continue our policy of responding to every letter we receive.

Additionally, we serve as stewards of the Isabelle and Karl Patten Fund, which has grown substantially in recent years. This year, to honor the core goals of the Patten Fund, we selected seven like-minded organizations doing commendable work and issued grants from the fund to support their efforts. Those organizations are:

- The Prison Policy Initiative
- The Brennan Center for Justice
- The Marshall Project
- The Remedy Project
- Families Against Mandatory Minimums
- The Moshannon Valley Support Network (Juntos)
- The CommUnity Zone



Finally, during the recent Raise the Region fundraiser, our community came together to raise a total of $2,280. Given the pressing humanitarian needs of our times, we directed the entirety of these funds toward local immigrant detainees and their families.

We deeply appreciate the demonstrated support of our community. As always, we remain strictly committed to ensuring that every dollar donated has the maximum possible impact on improving the conditions of confinement for incarcerated people locally and nationwide.

Scan here for our Volunteer Interest Form or email admin@lewisburgprisonproject.org. We have lots of different ways for you folks to engage with LPP!

IMMIGRANT DETENTION

- **The current population of detained immigrants is at least 70,000 individuals in 225 active detention centers.**
- **Of those detained 46,000 have no criminal conviction.**
- **The vast majority – 220 of 225 (98%) – of detention centers are for profit corporations.**

Annual Party & Award - Kim Daubman

The Lewisburg Prison Project's annual party was held on August 29th at the Bull Run Tap House in Lewisburg with music provided by Bill Flack, Mike Hickey, and Safa Saracoglu. A large crowd joined us in support of our mission of advocating for the rights of incarcerated people and to celebrate this year's recipient of the Isabelle and Karl Patten Award, Janice Butler.

LPP Board President, Angela Trop, welcomed guests and spoke briefly about LPP's partnership with Snyder Union Northumberland - Immigrant Community Support (SUN-ICS) to expose conditions of detention for immigrants. Angela then introduced board member, Kim Daubman (below right), to present the Isabelle and Karl Patten Award to Janice Butler.



2026 Isabelle & Karl Patten Award Winner, Janice Butler

The Patten Award is given to a deserving community member who embodies the spirit of LPP Founders Isabelle and Karl in their pursuit of social justice. Janice's lifetime of advocating on behalf of marginalized groups and working tirelessly for a kinder and more just world makes her eminently deserving of this award.

Most recently, Janice played a key role in forming SUN-ICS. Janice serves on the coordinating committee of this organization and leads the advocacy and policy team. In this role, she has advocated for policies that protect the privacy and safety of immigrants at schools, places of employment, health care settings, and places of worship. She consults with regional communities who are resisting the militarization of police departments by essentially deputizing local police officers as ICE agents.

Janice has also organized several actions to bring attention to the abysmal conditions in detention centers and the fact that most immigrants have never been charged with a crime, including those imprisoned at FCI Lewisburg and the Moshannon Valley Processing Center in Clearfield County. Janice's advocacy for immigrants builds on her leadership as a member of the Buffalo Valley Regional Police Commission, where she has been influential in setting policy, including one that precludes Buffalo Valley police officers from acting as ICE agents.

There is a clear throughline to Janice's work. Decades ago, she became the first director of the Women's Resource Center at Bucknell. In this role, she developed numerous educational programs on issues of particular concern to women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and the glass ceiling. Many of her programs foregrounded women of color and LGBTQ+ concerns. She saw a need for a better way to respond to sexual assault survivors and created and directed a sexual assault survivor advocates program that was grounded in an understanding of trauma and the importance of empowerment.

Another of her lasting contributions is the creation of Bucknell's Office of Civic Engagement. Her persistence and compelling arguments overcame administrative reticence and the office blossomed under her leadership. Janice facilitated hundreds of meaningful collaborations between community organizations and Bucknell faculty, staff, and students. These served to enrich student learning, strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility, address critical societal issues, and contribute to the common good.

Janice organized trips to Mississippi and New Orleans to help communities rebuild after Hurricane Katrina, and was a key player in establishing the long-running Bucknell Brigade to Nicaragua that began as an effort to help communities rebuild after the extreme destruction of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Countless students, staff, faculty, and community members have traveled with the Bucknell Brigade helping Nicaraguans rebuild, bringing medicines, and learning about an alternative worker-owned democratic economic model.

We believe Isabelle and Karl would be well-pleased that Janice Butler, whose life's work embodies their shared commitment to social justice, is the 2026 recipient of the award that bears their name.

Support In Detention - Dan Grote

Contrary to popular belief, there's not a whole heck of a lot of rehabilitation or assistance present within this country's correctional systems. For quite a few of us, friends, family, or anything we might have had in the way of a support system, are among the first things we lose once that cell door slams behind us. The majority of us were represented by well-meaning yet horribly overworked and underpaid public defenders whose services end upon sentencing, and as far as the prison staff being helpful? Let's just say that, with a few exceptions, the majority of them seem almost as unhappy and uninterested as your average inmate.

So who does a prisoner turn to for help with post-conviction issues? Where does a convict turn when a sentence has been imposed unfairly or in error, or when a sentencing guideline or amendment change happens that could lead to a reduction in sentence and getting out sooner to their loved ones? Generally, the option at hand (and certainly the cheapest) is a "Jailhouse Lawyer." Jailhouse lawyers run the gamut from simple con men with no clue as to what they're doing to disbarred real-world esquires on the wrong side of a locked door. I'm one of these "lawyers" (FYI, I'm somewhere in the upper middle of the aforementioned gamut, in that during my almost 20 years within the federal prison system, I've read enough law to stumble my way through some fairly effective litigation. I've helped some good guys get a decent amount of time back, so lucky or good, whatever, I'll take it), and a big part of what's allowed me to help others is the help I've gotten from you all at LPP.



In my world, the legal resources are meager, incomplete, and without fail outdated. "Updated" case law on our electronic law library means at least 6 months old. That being said, LPP has never failed to provide me with new case law or answer questions as they arise.

I'm a rare species in that I don't charge for my services. I help because it's the right thing to do. I help because, truthfully, I've given up on myself. I'm a year to the door with nowhere to go and nobody waiting on me to get there and a 77% chance that says I'll make it less than 5 years in the "free" world. Helping others allows me to forget all that. I could not do that without all of you there at Lewisburg Prison Project. The work you all do, the advocacy, the monitoring of prison conditions, all of it. It all helps, most of it probably more than you will ever know.

I say all that to say, simply, this - thank you. On behalf of myself and each and every other person "polite society" would rather forget about, thank you to each and every one of you. You are making a difference, whether you see it or not, and in many ways, what you kind folks do every day is helping to bring a little hope into an environment built on hopelessness, and it is not going unnoticed nor unappreciated. Keep up the good work and thanks again.

HARD TIME HAIKU

- **Dan Grote**

Behind Prison Walls
you see only locked doors and
wish you were the key.

LPP by the NUMBERS - Carol Pavlick

October 2025 - 2026

1032 Letters Received

1037 Letters Sent

Become a member; help us grow!

We welcome new members and others who want to support our mission. Share our information and/or help others find us at: HTTPS://WWW.LEWISBURGPRISONPROJECT.ORG/CONTACT





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A special thank you to our Prison Board meeting volunteer Stanley Frankel, who is attending prison board meetings in Northumberland County, and Erin DeSantis who consulted with us about strategy for fundraising and social media. If you're interested in learning more or volunteering, please reach out to admin@lewisburgprisonproject.org.

Thank You!

to our donors, members, & especially our volunteers





Lewisburg Prison Project
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Lewisburg Prison Project Mission

The Lewisburg Prison Project, Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides advocacy, information, and legal assistance to people incarcerated in Pennsylvania regarding their conditions of confinement. We also provide incarcerated people across the United States with information and legal bulletins regarding conditions of confinement.

We are dedicated to the principle that incarcerated people have incontestable human and constitutional rights.



THANK YOU!