

[FULL TOOLKIT FOLDER HERE](#)

11/11/24 Teach-In & Take Action with MAMAS, Midwest Books to Prisoners, & Restore Justice; **6-7:30pm** (central) on zoom- **Register at bit.ly/IDOCmailban**

Overview:

The IDOC is trying to quietly halt physical mail from coming in to the people imprisoned there- they must not succeed!

Take Action!

1. Email the IDOC Director & your legislators and tell them you OPPOSE any actions to further limit or restrict delivery of mail to people incarcerated in IDOC, including/specifically proposed [HB5893](#)
 - a. You can use this  Copy/Paste Email or write your own

2. [Call Lt Governor Stratton / Governor Pritzker](#)

Use any/all of these numbers:

a. 312-814-2121	d. 217-782-6831
b. 312-814-2122	e. 217-782-0244
c. 217-782-6830	f. Hearing Assist: 888-340-1009

3. SPEAK OUT! Spread the word about what's happening! Share this toolkit (bit.ly/IDOCmail) across your networks and social media. Use this information, or your own experiences, to CREATE MORE CONTENT! Talk with your community members about this issue, and encourage them to take action, too!
 - a. [Social Media Shareables](#)
 - b. [article link]

10/15/24 Update: Rep David Friess filed [HB5893](#) today: “The Department of Corrections shall create and implement a policy of electronic scanning and processing of all incoming mail in all Department of Corrections institutions and facilities”

If this bill moves forward, we will update this toolkit with links to provide “opponent” testimony & witness slips.

On Sept 23, 2024, a group of 6 legislators [sent a letter to IDOC Dir](#) Latoya Hughes, urging the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) to “temporarily suspend the processing of all non-legal mail within its facilities...while the Governor’s office, IDOC, and the legislature work together on permanent solutions” claiming it out of concern for safety, and in response to “constituent reports concerning exposure to drugs and other unknown substances within prison facilities” and having “been in communication with union representatives for IDOC employees” However, there have been murmurings over the past year both in the IDOC and the Lt Governor’s office of plans to transition the IDOC to fully digitized systems of mail delivery- which will further privatize and monetize an already despicable business model in which private companies rake in huge profits by exploiting imprisoned people and their loved ones. People incarcerated in the IDOC would also not be able to receive actual photos, cards, or handwritten letters from their loved ones, which further limits their connection to vital relationships and is dehumanizing.

People on the inside of some IDOC prisons have confirmed (as of 9/24/24) that they are not receiving mail, and were informed that there will be no mail delivery until further notice.

10/8/24 Op-Ed from Midwest Books To Prisoners: [IDOC Shouldn’t Ban Mail and Books in Prisons – South Side Weekly](#)

10/18/24 Statement from Restore Justice: [Restore Justice Opposes Mail Suspension and Mail Scanning in the IDOC](#)

Facts & Resources:

Medical experts have routinely debunked any possibility that one could have significant drug exposure or overdose by simply “handling” something- like drug soaked papers or even handling powder fentanyl- yet fear-mongering police and mainstream media continue to perpetuate this misinformation through clickbait videos etc.

- [Fentanyl Myths Debunked by an ER Doctor](#)
- [Police reports of accidental fentanyl overdose in the field: Correcting a culture-bound syndrome that harms us all](#)
- [Can touch this: training to correct police officer beliefs about overdose from incidental contact with fentanyl | Health & Justice](#)

- [What's Really Going on in Those Police Fentanyl Exposure Videos? - The New York Times](#)
- [Cops say they're being poisoned by fentanyl. Experts say the risk is 'extremely low'](#)

Recently, [6 Shawnee mailroom staff members were hospitalized, but tests came back NEGATIVE](#) for drugs

Other state prison systems where mail scanning is used has not stopped the flow of drugs or created greater safety:

- [Despite 5 years of mail scanning to keep drugs from Pa. prisons, problems remain - pennlive.com](#)
- [Overdoses Rise in Missouri Prisons Despite Strict New Mail Policy](#)

These measures come after a year of increased restrictions and murmurings within IDOC and the Lt Governor's office of transitioning to privatized companies to manage mail and books

- Section I of [New Mail Procedures Policy 05.02.151](#)- which was NOT published or [on IDOC's website](#) or given public comment period- established that in June 2023, a pilot mail scan program was put in place at the Menard Correctional Center, to be implemented into additional IDOC facilities in the future by authorization from the Director
 - The Mail Scanner shall photocopy each piece of mail and once completed, the mail shall be placed into an envelope with the individual in custody's name, number and current cell location and distributed to the individual in custody.
- It's unclear why drugs supposedly still proliferate in Menard, despite this program being in place
- This process still involves IDOC staff touching the physical mail, so is inconsistent with the claims of concerns for staff's safety
- This memo also eliminated the possibility for friends/families to send books directly to loved ones; they must now come from a publisher/distributor

[Why Mail Service Is So Important to People in Prison | Brennan Center for Justice](#)

[Listen: Why Physical Mail In Prison Matters](#)

[More and More Prisons Are Banning Mail | Vera Institute](#)

[Technology Was Supposed to Help People in Prison. It's Backfiring in a Big Way.](#)

Testimonials from folks inside:

“Receiving mail while in jail is almost like receiving a Christmas gift. It makes us feel special and remember. Walking up to get your mail, you can see and feel the eyes watching you. Some maybe just naturally curious and others jealous. I remember the first few months of being [incarcerated]- writing and receiving letters seemed very ancient to me, but soon I appreciated it's worth. A handwritten letter, someone taking the time out of their busy day to write to me makes me feel special.” -*anonymous*

“There’s something about that mail coming through the slot and hearing your name get called that reminds you how valued you are. It was something I could take with me when I moved from facility to facility. It didn’t matter where I went, those photos would end up on the side of my bunk.” -*Marcus, incarcerated for eight years from the age of 15*

“For us, for my husband personally, physical pictures are what keep him motivated. They are what keep him going day to day. Having a physical picture or having a physical card cannot compare to a scanned version that is printed from the kiosk.” -*Tatiana, whose husband is incarcerated*