



David A. Clarke Jr.
Sheriff

Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office

NEWS RELEASE

Fran McLaughlin
Public Information Officer
Cell: 414-254-9488
Phone: 414-278-5226
fran.mclaughlin@milwenty.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Chris Abele Runs from His Responsibility and Lies Again

Milwaukee, WI – Statement from Sheriff Clarke regarding County Executive Chris Abele blaming deteriorating conditions at House of Correction on the sheriff:

County Executive Abele must have “forgotten” that he took over the House of Correction in Franklin last April. He, Supervisor Pat Jursik and Judge Jeff Kremers went against the advice of the National Institute of Corrections auditor who recommended in 2008 that the facility, (which he described as one of the worst-run detention facilities he had seen in over 20 years of inspecting lock-up facilities), be placed under the direction of the sheriff to straighten it out.

Before I took over the facility in 2009, it had a \$5 million deficit, was plagued with a lack of discipline, poor supervision, employee sick use abuse, inmate fights, and excessive and unnecessary overtime use. Warrants were on file for over 400 inmates who had escaped Huber release and electronic monitoring.

In a little over a year, most of the problems were rectified, the deficit wiped out, inmate fights became rare, employee attendance improved and overtime was within budget. Every inmate who had escaped Huber release and electronic monitoring had been located and arrested by an absconder unit I created. The improvements were documented by Dr. Jeffrey Schwartz of the NIC in a follow-up report to the county board. The facility became a well-functioning part of county government.

Final Report: A Focused Review of the Milwaukee County Correctional Center-South; National Institute of Corrections; Technical Assistance # 10J1013; December 20, 2009; Jeffrey A. Schwartz: *‘Sheriff David A. Clarke, Jr. assumed responsibility for the deeply troubled Milwaukee HoC on January 1, 2009. The positive and comprehensive transformation of that facility in less than a year’s time is nothing short of miraculous. That is not hyperbole but is the carefully considered conclusion of the author based on over thirty years of observing and studying changes in correctional facilities.’*

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When I took over operations of the facility, I did not whine about the horrible situation I had been handed. I rolled up my sleeves, put an organizational change team in place, and went to work. I didn't blame the former superintendent when we experienced setbacks from time to time. Setbacks are normal in organizational change.

One of the changes I made to improve public safety was to scale back considerably on the use of electronic monitoring, which put repeat criminals back into crime-plagued neighborhoods to serve out their sentences. We saved tax dollars in the process.

That policy decision did not sit well with criminal apologists Abele, Kremers, Jursik and other criminal advocates. Because they wanted a softer hand in dealing with recidivist criminals, some dangerous, they - in a purely political move - reversed themselves, and Abele took over running the facility.

Recently, the wife of a corrections officer at the HOC wrote to me detailing the deteriorating and dangerous conditions that have returned under Abele. Inmate fights have resurfaced, overtime has skyrocketed and people cannot get a day off, working 14, 15 and 16 days in a row.

As only Abele can, he immediately ran and is blaming me. He "forgot" that he has eliminated 76 correction officer positions in his budgets since 2011. That is why there is a shortage. He can be forgetful. He forgot for seven years after being arrested for drunk-driving that he needed to accept responsibility and pay for that citation. Abele's Human Resources Department now cannot keep up with the hiring that is occurring just to fill vacancies. In Abele's world he is never responsible for anything that doesn't go right.

The county executive conveniently ignores two vital points: In the weeks after the May 6, 2013, transfer of control of the House of Correction, 19 correctional officers took transfers (at the same rank and pay) from the Milwaukee County Jail to the HOC, increasing their staff. Since that May date, MCSO has graduated 29 new COs from a training program... and the HOC has graduated zero.

The woman who detailed what is happening advises that it be placed back under my direction. I'm done with it, however; it's out of my hands. I run the jail. Note to Abele: I don't run the HOC, you do. Time to put on big boy pants, Chris, and take responsibility. It's yours. You wanted it, now handle it. You think you know more about running a detention facility than I do. Now we'll see. The blame game dog just won't hunt this time. Most people have caught on to your pattern of lies and shirking responsibility.

Email from wife of correctional officer on next page:

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From: xxxxxx
To: <sheriff@milwcnty.com>
Date: 08/15/2013 07:09 PM
Subject: House of Corrections Working Conditions

My husband is a corrections officer for the House of Corrections in Franklin. Since the spilt from the Sherriff's Office last spring the working conditions have deteriorated and I'm very concerned about the health and well being of employees within this facility.

Currently my husband is on his 14th straight day of work and during this 14 day stretch he has worked 5 12-hour days. His working without an off day will continue because he has been forced for what is supposed to be his weekend off this Saturday and Sunday. Not to mention he has already been forced to work to work on Wednesday (6 days out) which is his typical off day during the week. There appears to be no end in sight for his days of continuous work. They don't even have a hiring class organized to start training until late October to help with the under staffing!

Believe it or not he is one of the lucky ones, due to his years of service he has been able to avoid some of the worst overtime. There are several corrections officers that haven't received a day off in months. Overtime is so bad that officers will pay other officers cash on top of working their forced overtime just to get a day off or spend time with their families. My husband has even had to postpone doctor appointments because he doesn't know if he will be forced for additional shift that same day and have to work a 16 hour day. Lieutenants can call officers an hour before their shift ends and force them to work an additional 8 hour shift.

I wish I was making this up, I can't believe a government employer can be run so corruptly. My husband is in danger every day, he is a correctional officer he is surrounded by inmates who are in jail because they are criminals. There are 60 inmates to a dorm and one very tired over worked officer. How does this make sense better yet how is this safe? Sheriff Clarke needs to be back in charge because there will be a major incident if this facility is left to run this way.

This is the email I have sent to my state representatives and will continue emailing them!

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