

# UNITED VOICES for SEX OFFENSE REFORM

## General Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 12, 2024, 7:30 PM EST / Via ZOOM

Attendees: 25

### Overview for General Meeting

- Group Discussion
  - Call to order, review, and approve the last meeting minutes
  - Non-profit update
  - Team Updates
    - Three-minute updates by team leaders with additional time for Q&A
    - Please use “Raise your hand” function to ask questions
    - Refrain from discussing political agendas, issues, or opinions unless it is in direct alignment with our advocacy mission
- Other Business
- Roundtable

### Group Discussion

1. Meeting called to order at 7:35 PM EST and review of last meeting – Group  
The 10/29/2024 meeting minutes were approved and will be posted on the [website](#).
2. Non-Profit Updates – Shawn L., Executive Director  
Board members meet monthly and are working on processes and applications to be implemented in the first quarter of 2025.
  - Members working on CiviCRM are meeting on 11/19/2024 in anticipation of getting the application installed and uploading our current membership data.
  - The next board meeting will be on Sunday, 1/12/2025.
3. Advocacy Participation Team (APT) – Sharon M.
  - The procedure for vetting new members is being reviewed and revised.
  - The member spreadsheet is being updated in anticipation of importing it into Civi.
  - Rita B. and Sharon M. are exploring ideas for member engagement in 2025.
4. State Coalitions Team (SCT) – Shawn L.
  - A team leaders meeting was held on 10/28/2024.
  - Shawn explained UV4SOR’s goal of forming coalitions for every state and the benefits of gathering information within your state and sharing what you learn.
  - SC team leaders Shep S. and Ann S. discussed a process that they went through to contact and ultimately meet their State Senator, Jay Chaudhuri. They shared their plan, what they learned, and the advice they received to help them prepare for the meeting – *see below*.
  - Jenny L. shared how the IL team is working with other advocacy groups within the state to address the issues of long-term care for those who are justice impacted. She attended the [Illinois Guardianship Association Fall Conference](#) where she and Dr. Stephanie Jerstad spoke about “Individuals Forced to Register – Obstacles to Housing”.

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- Shawn L. reviewed a recent ruling in the *Does III v. Whitmer* case in MI that struck down significant portions of Michigan's SORA, which will impact tens of thousands of those required to register in MI as the [court found multiple constitutional violations!](#)
5. Welcome Team – Ann & Shep S.  
The team is reaching out to all new members who attend their first meeting to welcome them.
  6. Communication Team (CT) – Kathy DV.
    - The team mailed a letter from UV4SOR to RI Senator Whitehouse as suggested by member Brenton T., which challenged the senator's recent comments regarding the Supreme Court's historical use of its own facts.
    - The team will meet again prior to the end of the year.
  7. Call to Action (CTA) – Shawn L.  
CTAs were reviewed and encouraged. Past CTAs can be viewed on the website.
    - UV4SOR received a letter from the BOP in response to our CTA regarding the TRULINCS messaging system for those in federal custody. The board is conducting research to incorporate into a response to the BOP.
    - All members who have a federally incarcerated LO are encouraged to contact the Support Coordinators with any concerns, issues, and questions. Emails can be sent to: [BOP-RSD-SupportAndAdvocacy-S@bop.gov](mailto:BOP-RSD-SupportAndAdvocacy-S@bop.gov)
  8. No More Silence Project – Betty B.  
The team has received enough letters to split mailings into two packets. Betty is working on a spreadsheet to document contributor's information and keeping files of all stories and ROIs.
  9. Holiday Greetings Campaign – Rita B.  
The member volunteers for this year's Christmas Letters and Season Greetings campaign will mail greetings to 58 incarcerated loved ones. The greetings will all be mailed and postmarked by 12/6/2024 to ensure that they are received before Christmas.
  10. Fundraising Team – Rita B.
    - The GivingTuesday global event is on 12/3/2024. Rita has made posts in the FB group and an email will be sent to all members on 11/19/2024 to explain the need for funds to operate our non-profit organization and to ask for donations.
    - Rita has gathered more items for consignment.
    - The Kroger and Tru-Earth fundraising campaigns are ongoing, and quarterly checks have been received from both.
    - Kim B. suggested that the team investigate TAGG as a possible funding avenue.
    - Donations can be made to UV4SOR through our [website](#).

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### 11. PR/Marketing Team – Shawn L. and Jenny L.

- Positive reviews have been received on [Dr. Tolliny Rankins](#) who was our last guest speaker on 10/29/2024.
- Possible future guest speakers can be referred by members through the [referral form on the website.](#)
- The UV4SOR board will be hosting the annual Holiday Gathering/Member Appreciation event on Tuesday, 12/10/2024, with details coming soon.

### Other Business

- UV4SOR received notice today that our Distinguished Board Member, [Bonnie Burkhardt](#) has been nominated for a potential role in the Trump administration through a novel approach of drawing directly from the input of citizens for help in nominating people of integrity and courage for over 4,000 appointments across the future administration. Shawn L. spoke with Bonnie and will send an email to all members, encouraging everyone to vote for her!
- Shawn L. provided reminders for upcoming events in the next week and encouraged participation. The events with [Restorative Action Alliance](#) and [PARSOL](#) have previously been shared in the FB group and through emails to all members.

### Roundtable

#### 1. New Member Welcome and Introductions

Kim D. from AZ and Christopher C. from MO introduced themselves, shared their stories, and were welcomed by the group. Kim D. shared several resources: the book "[Caught in the Web of the Criminal Justice System](#)" and the website [dthree.org](#) (Decriminalize Developmental Disabilities). Christopher C. discussed the challenges he faced with legal guardianship and the adoption of his son as an adult.

#### 2. Share Something Good

- Jonathon M. shared that although he was recently wrongly accused of a crime and arrested, the case was dismissed and he is recovering from the trauma and learning from the experience.
- Joe M. traveled to visit his daughter, played golf, and applied for a new job.

The annual Holiday Gathering/Member Appreciation event is on Tuesday, December 12, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. EST.

The next general meeting date is Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. EST.

9:20 p.m. EST meeting adjourned.

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### UVSOR PRESENTATION 11/12/24 Ann and Shep Smith

- I had been emailing Senator Chaudhuri (Democratic Whip) for some time because he kept emailing me endorsements asking for donations for the governor's campaign. I kept emailing back asking him questions about the DOC etc.
- At an event to meet Heather Cox Richardson, (popular social media commentator,) the senator was at the door, shaking hands.
- I shook his hand and said, "I'm so glad to finally meet you. You never respond to my emails to you or the candidate for governor who you are actively supporting."
- "Oh," he said, "great, tell me what issue you are concerned with?"
  - I told him that I had great concerns for the NC legal system along with the overcrowded, understaffed dangerous prisons and extremely long sentencing
    - "Oh that's not something we're going to address. It's not one of the things I deal with Next..."
- I was pretty crushed and taken aback but went ahead to the event of the evening.

### MONTHS LATER

- We were invited to a Meet the Candidates afternoon and we went and spoke with several, though we were having a difficult day because our son Nick had been transferred once again and he was terrified.
  - We noticed Senator Chaudhuri and approached him as he greeted us.
    - "I want you to know how crushed I was when I last met you at the Cox speaking night. Also, how old are your two kids again? Hmmmm, I just hope to God that you NEVER have to live through the hell we are living through with our son incarcerated for a very long time." At that point, my tears started to emerge.
    - "Oh" he asked, "What did I say?" I told him.
    - "I would like to know more about your son. Please make an appointment for us to meet."
- We emailed the senator which went to his assistant, and we made appointment in his office. Unfortunately, it would be just a couple weeks before election.

*Prior to our appointment, we asked for some ideas of what to say to the Senator from several people whose opinions we value. Here is some of what we learned:*

*\*Do your homework on what bills that person many have authored, sponsored or voted against. If nothing, then find something else to thank him for.*

*\*Explain your situation briefly and the impact of the sentence on you, your loved one, and family. Try to bring info and educate on mandatory minimums, risk assessments and how second chances can help to offset colossal expense to taxpayers by offering programming to reduce recidivism. Suggest ideas and remind them of many constituents who support this as well.*

*\*Explain that DOC is not working as it is overcrowded, not a deterrent to crime and change is needed.*

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*\* Do not leave without setting up a follow-up meeting (with him, or his assistant) and get business cards.*

*\*Send a thank you for his time and find some commonality with him. You need him to understand the human side or incarceration.*

We proceeded to write “scripts” for each of us so that we could both share information. He came in rushed and he and his assistant brought us into the senator’s office.

- No way to stay on script. We realized quickly he was way too busy.
- Chaudhuri was taking notes, but moved us along when we began to wander into how poorly the NC DOC is working, the costs, etc. We knew not to even go down the path of Registry.
- We mentioned Mandatory Minimums, Cost to taxpayers, second chances, and risk assessments, along with the overcrowding and more. And described our son’s crime, the good things he’s accomplished, his completely clean record while incarcerated and how over sentenced we feel he is, and how we aim to find a way to reduce his sentence
- We then shared that Nick had been randomly transferred once again which totaled 5 times in 7 years.
  - He caught onto that and began making notes of where Nick could be transferred that would be better.
    - We kind of panicked BECAUSE Nick had just been accepted into a Braille program (the only one in NC and one of 35 in the country) in the new dangerous and huge prison he’d been sent to.
      - Braille had great potential and a 2-year commitment to learn and work in Correctional Enterprises
  - So, we discouraged Chaudhuri from trying to get Nick moved back or elsewhere at least until we confirmed with Nick.
  - Nick felt he could not handle another change at this time and as a former teacher, translating text into Braille for students appealed to him.
- We asked the senator what next step would be and he said we would hear back from him to schedule a follow up meeting.
- We thanked him for running the campaign of the candidate for governor.
- I followed up by emailing all of Nick’s information, Opus, etc. along with a Thank you.