

## LET FREEDOM RING: INCARCERATED VETERANS

Although the US believes in honoring veterans for their dedication and service to our country, more than 1,000 veterans remain imprisoned in Illinois. Veterans are understandably at risk for involvement in the criminal legal system – many experience unimaginable trauma. Yet they often receive longer sentences than non-veterans. One in ten veterans in prison in Illinois is serving a life sentence, a rate nearly three times higher than for non-veterans.

This harm is particularly pronounced for elderly veterans. Incarcerating elderly people costs the state two to five times more because of the expensive cost of their medical needs, even veterans who would be entitled to VA benefits if released.

Through the Let Freedom Ring campaign, the Illinois Prison Project represents about 120 elderly incarcerated veterans, each whom has served more than 20 years in prison, in clemency, administrative, and resentencing proceedings. In addition to fighting for their freedom, IPP helps each of our veteran clients obtain a range of benefits, including mental health treatment, healthcare, pensions, housing, and reentry services. If necessary, IPP partners with other groups to pursue discharge upgrades and other legal services.



### Lawrence G.

Lawrence G. turned to drugs and alcohol to medicate years of childhood abuse, trauma from his time in the military, and undiagnosed depression and anxiety. Now more than two decades into a 30-year prison sentence for killing someone in self defense, Lawrence has taken every opportunity to demonstrate he's more than the sum of a single act.

Lawrence was an instrumental co-founder of the Building Block program at Danville Correctional Center, a peer-mentoring program designed and led by incarcerated people. He loves mentoring young people. In particular, he enjoys teaching emotional intelligence, anger management, wellness and meditation. In addition, Lawrence also founded the DanVets Veteran Program, specifically designed to support incarcerated veterans like himself.