

Robert James Ostman, Sr.
308 Carolina Springs Court
Conway, SC 29527

January 30, 2016

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

We have all heard the stories of how people disappeared off the streets of Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union. These people would just disappear and not be heard from leaving their families in despair. I guess it is surprising to hear that the same thing happens here.

People get themselves arrested for many reasons. When this happens it may be days before anyone knows what happened to them. I have an example I would like to tell you about.

My neighbor is a disabled Vietnam vet. Let's call him Jack, as everyone does. He suffers from PTSD and can be a very difficult person. As a vet myself I understand him whereas many others do not. They merely tolerate him the best they can.

It was becoming apparent to our neighbors that something was going terribly wrong with Jack. His behavior was becoming more and more strange. He was leaving notes on people's cars that the Federal Government was now in control of SC and there were going to be changes. He claimed to anyone who would listen that he was working for the "feds". Being too tied up in my own life and my own problems I was unaware of this. I have not been in Jack's house in months. Since he started working at a rehabilitation facility that works with vets and released convicts to train them for jobs I didn't see him as much. Mostly when we would walk our dogs out back.

Jack's life was helping others. He volunteered at thanksgiving and Christmas feeding the homeless and the hungry. He missed all the parties because of this but he was determined to help others less fortunate than himself. It's hard for me to imagine anyone less fortunate than Jack. His wife was killed by a drunk driver years ago and his only son lives one-thousand miles away in Boston. He lives on a very meager fix income.

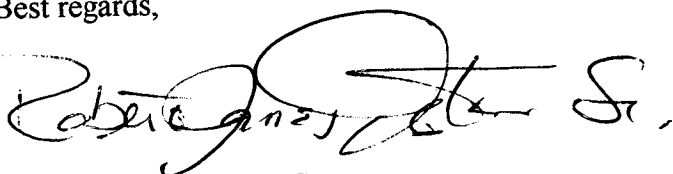
On Monday, January 26, 2016, a neighbor came to me and said Jack was acting strange and that they had not seen him in a few days. I looked in the garage window and his car was not there. I then broke onto Jack's house to get his dog. He had been without food for days. I took him home with me. I then started calling hospitals, police stations up and down the Grand Strand, Conway and other towns. No one had any information regarding Jack. Out of desperation I called the J. Ruben Long facility and there he was. He has been there for three days. He had called no one. He was arrested for having a gun on the front seat of his car. After I bailed him out he told me he didn't call anyone because it was part of "The Plan". He explained to me how he was working for the feds and was undercover. I took Jack home. He disappeared again the next day. I called to submit a missing person report the next day after he failed to return home that evening. As luck would have it, the dispatcher I was speaking with was also speaking to officers who were with Jack at that very moment. One has a better chance of

winning that lotto than that happening. I explained that Jack was in distress and to please hold him until his nephew, who lives in Myrtle Beach, and I could get there. God bless them, they did. We spoke with the officers and after they talked with Jack for two hours he finally agreed to get out of the car and go with them. I assure you this is not the way they do it "up north". After ten minutes of refusal he would have been dragged from the car, beaten and taken to a hospital where he would have been charged with resisting arrest. What these Horry County officers did was so kind I cannot even begin to express my gratitude. As we watched we were just waiting for the violent arrest to take place. It didn't happen. They treated him with respect and talked him into going voluntarily. It was cold and raining and they stood out there in that mess with the patience of saints. If I could, I would buy both of them new Corvettes.

Long story, but here is the problem. People disappear off the streets and they leave behind who knows what. A sick relative in bed at home they are supposed to be caring for? A pet? Kids crying because they don't know what happened to dad. Many of these people have mental problems. As in my case years ago, an elderly sick mother was left to wonder what happened after I went to get us a cup of coffee at a 7-11. I was arrested for being in possession of my own medication. Rather than carrying a months supply in the original bottle, I carried a few in a container in case I need them. Ups! Yet another thing that is against the law. I was not given a phone call. My family gathered in the middle of the night to call everyone they could think of. My mother figured I was dead in a ditch somewhere and no one had found me yet. My kid was frantic. They were punished much more than I was. Had a neighbor not mentioned to me that he had not seen Jack in days, his dog would have suffered a terrible death.

We need to make changes in prisoner intake. They need to be permitted to make a call very soon after intake. **If they claim they have no one to call, as Jack did, or are unable to reach anyone, an officer needs to visit neighbors to see if a pet or a person has been left in the house to die.** In Jack's case I think it would have been very easy to tell something was amiss. It didn't take a brain surgeon to see that something was very wrong with Jack. It should have been investigated. However, he was left to sit in jail for three days until he was found by me. In fact they did know something was wrong because they wouldn't release him unless I agreed to take him. They even had him in the Maximum Security Unit for some reason. He's 68, five foot nothing. MSU? Why? They had to think something was wrong. Had we not realized Jack was missing his dog would be dead and a sick old man would still be sitting in a jail cell, without his medication. It has to change. They are not guilty until court. They shouldn't be treated as if they are guilty until then. If any of your staff would like to discuss this and any changes that could be made to fix this dangerous situation, I am available. Considering the way the officers handled Jack, can't this decency be spread even into J. Ruben Long.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert James Ostman, Sr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Robert James Ostman, Sr.