

Costly Software Bug

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Technological Era

- We rely on technology everyday, it's almost impossible to imagine life without it
- Why has technology become so prevalent?
 - Efficiency; global communication; news; self-driving cars; Amazon Prime
- Are there consequences from this blind trust in technology?
 - In class we talked about the errors that arose during NASA's trip to the international space station

Fun Fact; Did you Know?

- In 1946 a moth was found preventing a relay in a system from functioning properly [2]
 - Coined the term 'bug' & 'debugging' used today

The Software ‘Bug’

- NPR reports that a software bug allowed inmates early release in Washington State [1]
- After 13 years, the error was finally realized
- As many as 3,200 inmates were affected by this bug
- “Corrections officials don't have a complete list of those prisoners who were let out early and can't say whether any of them committed crimes after they were freed.” [1]

[1] - All information on this slide taken from NPR article

How the ‘Bug’ Happened and was Identified

- 2002 state Supreme Court ruling required the Corrections Department to apply good-behavior credits earned in county jail
 - Certain crimes resulted in an increase of time given
 - Crimes using firearms
 - Crimes committed near school
- Catching the ‘Bug’
 - In 2012 a victim’s family learned of a prisoner’s release.
 - After the family did its own calculations, they found he was being credited with too much time

Conclusion

- In the United States, there are two notions when it comes to criminal punishment
 - No cruel or unusual punishment
 - A punishment that fits the crime
- In this case, the software bug may have contributed to both
 - Either extending the time a prisoner is required to serve
 - Or, letting a prison go before the required time is served

Citations

1. McCallister, D. (2015, December 23). Computer Glitch Allows 3,000 Inmates Early Release In Washington State. Retrieved September 01, 2020, from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/12/23/460779255/computer-glitch-allows-3-000-inmates-early-release-in-washington-state>
2. Software bug. (2020, August 28). Retrieved September 01, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software_bug