

The New York Times published a [story](#) last week highlighting the difficulties many exonerees face. The Times article focuses on Robert Dewey, a Colorado resident who spent 18 years in prison for a murder he did not commit. With the help of the Innocence Project and DNA testing that organization procured, Dewey was exonerated and released from prison. However, Dewey, now 52, encountered a world much-changed from what he knew when he was sentenced to life in prison nearly 20 years ago.

Because Dewey was sentenced to life in prison, he never learned about computers or took vocational classes while in prison. When released, he had no job skills that would help him adjust to life on the outside and no way to make ends meet. To make matters worse, Colorado is one of 23 states that have no system to compensate individuals who were wrongfully convicted. Many states have a system in place which will provide lost wages for each year of wrongful incarceration. For instance, in North Carolina, a wrongfully convicted individual receives an award of \$50,000 per year of wrongful incarceration up to a maximum of \$750,000. Such awards are administered by the North Carolina Industrial Commission and are intended to compensate an individual for wages he would have earned but for his wrongful incarceration. A similar bill is under consideration in Colorado that would provide exonerees such as Dewey \$70,000 for each year of wrongful imprisonment, plus tuition waivers at state colleges.

The story of Robert Dewey highlights the difficult time many exonerees experience when released from prison. Yes, they have their freedom, but often are ill-prepared to face life outside of prison. That situation is even worse when the exoneree has no source of income or funds with which to restart his life post-exoneration.