



New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

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President
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Executive Vice
President
Chris Hickey

The popular website, “The Empire Page” recently asked its readers to vote on the legislature’s involvement in prison closures (“Should the Legislature be Allowed to Block Closing of Unnecessary Prisons?” 12//12/08).

By an overwhelming 3 to 1 margin, the response was an emphatic “YES.”

Recording Secretary
Diane Davis

Obviously the Legislature plays a critical role in how our corrections system is run. As the old saying goes, “the Governor proposes, the legislature disposes.”

Treasurer
John Telisky

DOCS consistently puts out misleading information about capacity levels at state prisons. Part of my job as NYSCOPBA President is to set the record straight. To that end, I want to point out some alarming facts of my own: currently maximum security facilities are at 124 percent capacity; medium security facilities operate at approximately 101 percent capacity. Our members cringe when they hear about the myth of “half-empty facilities.”

Vice President,
Northern Region
Randy Page

Although the inmate population has decreased from 130 percent capacity to 105 percent capacity over the past 9 years, DOCS has misled New Yorkers to try to make them believe empty cells and empty facilities are common place.

Vice President,
Mid-Hudson Region
Kevin Walker

Despite the fact that DOCS endlessly sites misleading statistics to rationalize their scheme, many elected representatives in the State Legislature agree these statistics are “cooked.”

Vice President,
Law Enforcement
Jerry Dewitt

A perfect example of “cooked numbers” is the inmate to officer ratio. DOCS will tell you it’s 3 to 1. That would be accurate if every one of our members was on the job 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The actual ratio is 60 to 1. That’s right, one CO supervising up to 60 inmates.

Vice President,
Central Region
Tom Haas

DOCS has made a habit of haphazardly picking facilities for closure. In order for the right decisions to be made in these difficult financial times, DOCS should work with NYSCOPBA, potentially impacted local communities, and the State Legislature to make sure we make smart decisions that impact the entire prison system, as well as public safety.

Vice President,
Western Region
Al Mothershed

Quite frankly, the men and women of NYSCOPBA are tired of being told about stats that try to illustrate half-empty facilities. The reality is we still have 4,000 inmates who are “double-bunked.” A practice that forces two inmates to live in a cell or dorm cubical designed for one person. This practice presents a serious security threat to both Correctional Officers and inmates.

Vice President,
Southern Region
Willie Perez

Wouldn’t it be smarter to alleviate dangerous pressure on the system by eliminating “double-bunks” and assigning inmates to other facilities?

Our members respect the fact that state leaders face trying fiscal times and many difficult decisions in the upcoming 2009 session, but we remain committed to our members and the communities they work and live in. Our members work in unimaginably difficult environment. A simplistic “cut security first” strategy jeopardizes the safety and security of our state prisons. That is a dangerous proposition for public safety and the safety of my members.

We should all be concerned when a plan that impacts thousands of lives and the public safety of all New Yorkers is drawn in secret back rooms and announced via press release.

By seeking input from all parties, out in the open, we can make smart decisions that will continue to help us move forward together.