



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

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## **PRESIDENT OF CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS UNION SLAMS DOCS' PROPOSED PRISON CLOSURES**

### ***NYSCOPBA President Donn Rowe Testifies Before Legislature and Says Closures Place Public Safety and Local Economies in Serious Jeopardy***

**February 8, 2010 (Albany, NY)** – At a hearing before members of the State Legislature today, Donn Rowe, President of the 23,000 member New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA) said the Department of Correctional Service's (DOCS) proposed plan to close four prisons would place the safety of his members and the general public in serious jeopardy.

At the hearing, in the Legislative Office Building adjacent to the State Capitol, Mr. Rowe made his most detailed comments to date since the Executive Budget proposal was released that calls for the closure of the medium security Ogdensburg Correctional Facility; the minimum security Moriah Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility; the minimum security Lyon Mountain Correctional Facility; and the minimum security component of the Butler Correctional Facility.

“While the Legislature is being forced to make difficult choices on the budget during these challenging times, keeping our communities safe and protecting good-paying jobs must be top priorities,” Mr. Rowe said. “DOCS’ has yet again refused to look internally at their own bloated bureaucracy for cuts and decided to balance their budget on the backs of the men and women who serve as our front lines of protection for a prison system that remains overcrowded and understaffed.”

In his testimony, Mr. Rowe pointed to the fact that NYSCOPBA leadership has repeatedly raised concerns with DOCS about overcrowding and problems with safety for inmates and officers posed by inmates living in double bunked cells designed to hold one inmate. Currently, New York’s prison system as a whole is operating at 102% capacity, with maximum security facilities operating at more than 122% capacity.

“Sadly,” Mr Rowe continued, “I am before you today feeling as if our repeatedly raised concerns have again fallen on deaf ears at DOCS. NYSCOPBA believes that any honest and thorough review of DOCS practices should have resulted in a decision to reduce spending on the administrative level, not the front lines of public safety and security. It is the administrative level – where there is little to no direct impact on the security function of New York’s prisons – that can afford cuts.”

Mr. Rowe referenced a troubling recently released report by Senators Klein and Savino that he said further shows a gross misuse of DOCS resources and what the Senators said is “rampant mismanagement” at DOCS. The report finds that DOCS has spent more than \$15 million on “wasteful” administrative, housing and overtime costs.

Mr. Rowe concluded his testimony by speaking of the dire economic impact the proposed prison closures will have on the larger communities where they lie. “In every single municipality where these facilities reside they serve as one of the largest – if not the largest – employers in the area,” he continued. “Their longtime presence in these communities has helped to spawn economic growth in areas that have been and continue to be incredibly hard hit but these challenging economic times. The closures of these facilities would be absolutely devastating to these areas.”

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