

Records say 8 prison superintendents living at luxe, state-owned mansions for low cost

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ALBANY - Prison inmates aren't the only ones getting taxpayer-funded housing.

At least eight prison superintendents are living in the lap of luxury at low cost in state-owned mansions located on or near the prison premises, according to state records.

At least one has a lake view.

The best part for the superintendents, who top out at nearly \$145,000 a year, is they pay a pittance for the posh accommodations.

State Sens. [Jeffrey Klein \(D-Bronx\)](#) and [Diane Savino \(D-Staten Island\)](#) said it's time to revisit the arrangement given the cash-strapped state's fiscal problems.

"These superintendents live basically for free in large and luxurious [homes](#) where they don't have to worry about having to pay property taxes," Klein said.

Klein and Savino examined the housing in a report to be released today targeting savings at the state Correctional Services Department, which boasts at least 22 warden houses.

[Shawangunk Correctional Facility Superintendent Joseph Smith](#) lives in a 6,968-square-foot home located at nearby [Walkill Correctional](#) in [Ulster County](#), according to the Klein and Savino report and other records.

Smith, who makes \$144,574 a year, pays the state \$511.54 a month, according to Correctional Services Department records.

The most any superintendent pays for housing is [Joseph Bellnier](#) of Marcy Correctional Facility. [Earning](#) \$120,279 a year, Bellnier has just \$373.40 deducted from his check every two weeks for housing - or \$9,708 a year.

"We shouldn't be subsidizing superintendents of [prisons](#)," Klein said.

The Correctional Services Department should look to sell or rent the homes, if possible, or use them for additional state office space, Klein said.

At the very least, the superintendents should be required to pay the state "a fair and reasonable rate to live there," he said.

Prison system spokesman [Erik Kriss](#) said the "maintenance fee" rates the superintendents pay are set by the state budget division.

He said there is no way to sell houses that are located on prison grounds and that at least two have been converted for other uses. One was turned into a day care center, the other a business office.

Prison housing dates to the 1800s when residences were offered as incentives to attract prison wardens, who were expected to be available around the clock, Kriss said.

Many of the newer prisons do not have residences.

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