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GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES CLOSURE OF SEVEN STATE PRISON FACILITIES

Action fulfills Governor's pledge to make appropriate changes based on declining inmate population and provides \$184 million in savings to state taxpayers over next two years

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced he will close seven New York state prisons, fulfilling his pledge to consolidate the state's correctional facilities based on a declining inmate population and providing significant savings to New York state taxpayers.

Communities affected by the closures will be able to request economic development assistance from the state, which includes money from a \$50 million fund as well as additional tax credits available to help end the reliance on prisons as a major source of employment and economic sustainability.

The state's closure plan includes four male minimum security facilities: Buffalo Work Release (Erie County), Camp Georgetown (Madison County), Summit Shock (Schoharie County) and Fulton Work Release (Bronx County); and three male medium security facilities: Arthur Kill (Richmond County), Mid-Orange (Orange County) and Oneida (Oneida County).

Approximately 3,800 unneeded and unused beds will be eliminated, saving taxpayers \$72 million in 2011-12 and \$112 million in 2012-13. The offenders in these facilities will be moved to other prisons that have available space with no interruption. No maximum security facilities will close under this plan.

"The state's prison system has been too inefficient and too costly with far more capacity than what is needed to secure the state's inmate population and ensure the public's safety," Governor Cuomo said. "This plan is the result of very careful and detailed analysis and deliberation. It succeeds in targeting facilities for closure without compromising public safety and will save taxpayers \$184 million. We will work closely to ensure impacted areas are given substantial state aid to help them create jobs and transform their local economies. New York will continue to keep the highest standard of public safety and maintain one of the safest correctional systems in the country."

"The plan for prison closures in New York state reflects the state's changing and declining inmate population, while recognizing the benefit of programs that provide alternatives to incarceration and supervised re-entry into society," DOCCS Commissioner Brian Fischer said. "By closing facilities, removing excess capacity and focusing on the core programs that will

continue to rehabilitate offenders, DOCCS will provide the highest level of security to protect the public with greater efficiency and cost effectiveness."

Since 1999, New York's prison population has declined by 22 percent, from a high of 71,600 offenders incarcerated 12 years ago to approximately 56,000 today. The continuing downward trend of the state's prison population is largely attributed to the simultaneous drop in crime across the state. Over the past ten years, the overall rate of crime in New York has declined by 25 percent and the number of major crimes (e.g., homicide; assault) has declined by 23 percent.

From 2001 to 2010, the number of inmates housed at maximum security prisons declined by 2 percent (from 25,331 in 2001, to 24,822 in 2010), the number of inmates at medium security prisons decreased by 19.5 percent (from 35,763 in 2001, to 28,795 in 2010) and the number at minimum security facilities dropped by 57.2 percent (from 6,301 in 2001, to 2,698 in 2010).

Since the late 1980s, the State Legislature enacted several laws that offer mostly non-violent offenders early release as an incentive for good behavior and program achievements, including the Shock Incarceration, Work Release, Comprehensive Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment (CASAT), Willard Drug Treatment Campus, Merit Time and Limited Credit Time Allowance programs.

The 1973 Rockefeller Drug Laws have been reformed three times to allow many drug offenders to apply to have their sentences reduced, to allow some to earn extra time off their fixed minimum period of indeterminate sentences for good behavior and achievement of milestones involving treatment, educational, training and work programs, and, last year, to divert more new offenders into alternatives to incarceration.

These changes have already led to the early release of many offenders, virtually all of them non-violent drug offenders, on average eight months earlier than had the laws remain unchanged, resulting in the need for fewer prison beds.

Earlier this year, Governor Cuomo achieved the merger of the former Department of Correctional Services and Division of Parole into the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS). It is estimated that newly merged state agency will save state taxpayers \$17 million in the current 2011-12 fiscal year.

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