



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

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Vice President,  
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Vice President,  
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*Willie Perez*

## Overcrowd Already Crowded Prisons

September 25, 2008

“The New York State Department of Correctional Services today announced a plan that will jeopardize safety and put our members in harms way”, said Donn Rowe President of the New York State Correctional Officers P.B.A. (NYSCOPBA).

“Their plan is to overcrowd already crowded prisons in New York State”, said Rowe. In 2001 and 2004 the Department Of Correctional Services took the appropriate and proper steps of eliminating double bunks in New York State prisons. At that time the inmate population in New York Prisons was well above capacity at 130%. Currently NYS Prisons are operating at approximately 107% with over eight-thousand inmates in a double bunked situation. “Our members are already understaffed and work in the most dangerous atmosphere imaginable. We definitely understand the idea of saving costs, but doing so at the expense of our member’s safety can not be tolerated.”

While NYSCOPBA realizes the severity of the budget crisis and is willing to help the Department of Correctional Services solve some of their budgetary matters, we have to question the true impact of safety and security for both staff and inmates. “Having worked in New York State prisons for over 27 years, I can not believe that they have figured out a way to make a dangerous job even more dangerous.”

Donn Rowe  
President

For additional information or comments contact Donn Rowe at 518-427-1551.

# Making New York Prisons More Dangerous!

New York State is currently facing a severe budget crisis. The New York State Department of Correctional Services has implemented a plan that jeopardizes the security of our prisons and the safety of both Correction Officers and inmates. This plan calls for dormitory consolidations, which really means stuffing inmates in already overcrowded dorms. (See photo's attached) This will only increase tension between inmates and create the potential for conflict and violence.

Our 25,000 statewide members recognize that Governor Paterson and the State Legislature are facing some difficult choices when they meet on November 18.

We are asking that all New Yorker's better educate themselves as to how NYS prisons are currently operating. **Our prisons are already understaffed, already overcrowded, and already dangerous.** Rather than reducing the number of medium and minimum inmates in double bunk beds from 8,000 to 7,000, the Department has chosen to squeeze 1,000 inmates in already overcrowded dormitories and cut 300 vital Correction Officer positions.

Our brave members enter the most dangerous working conditions imaginable each and every day. Now the administrator's want to solve budgetary matters by crowding more inmates into overcrowded dorms, while at the same time cutting staff. Does this make sense?



## The Secret About N.Y.S. Prisons

- **NYS Prisons are currently at 107% of capacity.**  
"The technical capacity is how many single beds the facility will accommodate, so yes we are over capacity," (DOCS Spokesman Eric Kriss, Legislative Gazette October 6, 2008)
- **Over 8,000 inmates are housed in bunk-bed conditions.**
- **There are over 24,000 inmates housed in maximum security cells, currently at 124% capacity.**
- **There are over 30,000 inmates housed in medium security dormitories, currently at 102% capacity. When the lights go out in these dormitories one (1) Correction Officer is assigned to watch sixty (60) inmates.**

## Would you feel safe working behind the walls of a NYS Prison?



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**For Immediate Release: November 7, 2008**

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## **NYSCOPBA President Rowe, “Not on our members’ backs!”**

The NYS Department of Correctional Services has initiated a second round of agency cuts which they have referred to as a “consolidation plan.” I refer to this plan as a short term mess on paper, to appear as if they are saving money. Are they really saving anything other than their own jobs?

This “Plan” calls for squeezing more inmates into already overcrowded cells and dorms, while cutting vital Correction Officer staff and increasing tensions. The Commissioner is cutting necessary security from the prisons; at the same time, he is expanding his Executive Team by adding a new Deputy Commissioner position to oversee what he has identified as low and medium “core missions” of the Department. Is this fiscally responsible when all state agencies are operating under an across the board hiring freeze?

While they (administrators) are actively cutting necessary security posts in the prisons, they haven’t considered cutting the homes they get for free with all utilities included; the cars they get for free; the free gas they get; the credit cards they each have, and their free toll passes - that’s only the administrators. Additionally, the inmates continue to enjoy improved recreation areas, flat screen televisions, free college education, and the list goes on. The cost of all of the above financial benefits for administrators and inmates balance on the backs of our members and the New York State taxpayer.

According to D.O.C.S. own data, and their spokesman, the medium and maximum facilities are over 100% capacity. These overcrowded conditions include 8,000 inmates in double-bunked conditions. D.O.C.S. management’s response to the State’s fiscal crisis is to make line officer cuts and eliminate over 300 full time security staff. This random solution is irresponsible at best. **The first priority of government is public safety and security.** The Department of Corrections should immediately take down all double bunked inmates. This immediate action would restore our prison to their appropriate safety and security staffing levels. New York State prisons are already overcrowded, already understaffed, and dangerous enough. “We need more security in the prisons, not less. If any cuts are required, they should be made at the top. Unfortunately, until the next riot or death our warnings usually fall on deaf ears.”



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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE November 12, 2008 – Albany -**

**NYSCOPBA PRESIDENT ROWE, “THERE IS NO SHARING OF THE PAIN!”**

Facing a monumental fiscal crisis, the State of New York is making decisions that will impact the lives of all New Yorkers. “NYSCOPBA will not stand silent while its members who provide safety and security within New York State’s prisons are asked to bear more than their fair share of the State’s fiscal pain,” stated NYSCOPBA President, Donn Rowe.

In late September and early November of 2008, President Rowe voiced extreme -opposition to the New York State Department of Correctional Services’ alleged cost savings plan to consolidate several of New York’s prisons, and squeeze even more inmates into already over-crowded cells and dorms. “While they (DOCS) increase security risk, they are cutting vital Correction Officer staff positions,” said Rowe. Additionally, the State now seeks to have Correctional Officers and other civil servants bear even more of the burden associated with the State’s fiscal crisis by asking for concessions or “give-backs” from the State’s labor workforce.

Rowe points out, “We understand that the State is facing difficult times, but the pain must be shared equally across the board. At a time when the Commissioner of the Department of

Correctional Services is cutting vital Correctional Officer positions, squeezing inmates into already over-crowded prisons, and asking our Officers to do more with less, he is also expanding the number of administrators within his agency.”

According to Rowe, the prison consolidations implemented by the Commissioner not only greatly imperil Correctional Officers working in already extremely dangerous environments, they also thwart the intent of a State law designed to ensure that displaced Correctional Officers as a result of prison downsizing are afforded minimal notice prior to any relocation.

“The intent of the Prison Closure Notification Law, enacted just a few years ago, was to ensure that Correctional Officers and their families have at least some notice prior to any necessary relocation resulting from partial or total prison closures.,” adds Rowe. “While the Commissioner may refer to his actions as ‘consolidations’ they are having the same effect as a prison closure.”

According to Rowe, “There’s a growing morale problem within the prisons as a result of this Commissioner’s desire to generate ‘alleged’ savings at the expense of the Officers working inside the walls; and this problem is only going to get bigger if he continues in this same fashion.”

President Rowe explained that NYSCOPBA remains willing to work with the State and the Department in an effort to manage the State’s fiscal crisis. “...but if there is pain to be borne as a result of the struggling economy, it should be borne by all employees of the agency, including

administrators. NYSCOPBA expects fair treatment for its members. We ask nothing more, but we expect and will stand for nothing less,” stated Rowe.

# # #

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