

Crowd: Save prison jobs

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LYON MOUNTAIN — The voices of many were united Thursday afternoon in support of Lyon Mountain Correctional Facility.

More than 200 residents, business owners and elected officials gathered at American Legion 1623 in opposition to Gov. David Paterson's proposed closure of the northern facility, hoping their message will echo in Albany later this year.

"We can't tuck our tails and run. We have to stand up now," said Sgt. Mike Tolosky, who is a watch commander at the Lyon Mountain facility.

"This is not about a prison, this is about the North Country. We cannot take anymore. And if we don't stick together, we're definitely doomed."

Like Tolosky, Dannemora Town Supervisor Americo "Ves" Pivetta fears the potential closure of the minimum-security facility, along with Moriah Shock Incarceration in Essex County, will have a devastating impact on the local economy and tax base.

"We must preserve our local jobs. By closing our facility you create problems for our entire area. This facility is vital to the economy of our communities."

Sen. Betty Little (R-Queensbury) said residents "need to speak loud and be firm about our needs in the North Country.

"We cannot afford to have another empty facility. We built an economy around these facilities "i and we have a work force that depends on it."

Catering to the convenience of inmates and their downstate families is not the answer, she said, especially when the distance that divides them often takes inmates "away from what got them here in the first place."

She asked residents to flood the Governor's Office with letters of support.

Assemblywoman Janet Duprey (R-Peru) pledged her continued support to the facility and said the area has given enough.

"In fact, the North Country has given too much. We've had it, and we're not going to stand for it anymore."

Dan Connelly, program director at Lyon Mountain, said the facility has proven itself to be a success and contributed thousands of hours of work in the community and at nearby Clinton Correctional.

He said the facilities facing closure "work because they're not downstate where the problems exist" and that no price can be put on the work ethic and values instilled in inmates here.

"That work ethic cannot be overstated, and we've put hundreds of inmates back out with viable trades," he said while detailing the facility's numerous vocational and educational programs.

Clinton County Legislator Sam Trombley (Area 2) said the prison has been essential to the town since it opened in 1984, especially to the nearly 100 people employed there with families rooted in the area.

He said the only way to fight the January 2011 closure is for the "community to work together.

"We cannot afford to lose the only industry we have here."

"This isn't just about saving jobs," Clinton County Sheriff David Favro said. "It's about a community.

"And this facility has shown that it can operate and make a difference."

Donn Rowe, president of New York State Corrections Officer and Police Benevolent Association, said the latest round of closures is not only an attack on front-line staff and public safety but "on our prison system as a whole."

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Photos



Clinton County Sheriff David Favro was one of many who spoke in support of Lyon Mountain Correctional Facility during an informational meeting and rally Thursday. More than 200 employees and residents gathered at the American Legion to discuss how the closure will impact Lyon Mountain and the surrounding communities. View more photos from this event in the galleries at www.pressrepublican.com. Staff Photo



Corrections officer Bill Durnin hands out letters to be signed and sent to Gov. David Paterson outlining the economic and social challenges that Lyon Mountain residents face if the prison there closes. Paterson has proposed closing the minimum-security facility in January 2011 as part of sweeping state budget cuts. Staff Photo