

Carole Estabrook: Prisons need fewer bosses

[Carole Estabrook](#) AuburnPub.com | Posted: Monday, December 20, 2010 3:15 am |



The New York State Correction Officers and Police Benevolent Association issued a press release Thursday morning advertising the “first annual parking lot challenge.”

The rules of the contest are simple: any state elected official who can find a parking spot at the Department of Correctional Services headquarters in Albany will be entered into a drawing to win a one-week vacation in the Bahamas.

The tongue-in-cheek contest is of course a gag, intended to draw attention to what the union calls the bloated DOCS administration in Albany as the union fights to save blue-collar jobs from the chopping-block.

The announcement of the parking contest is an ironic commentary on what has been an arduous uphill battle to convince the state that prison closures and consolidations only endanger guards, inmates and the public.

The DOCS administration has argued, quite hilariously, that the addition of new jobs is the result of mandates beyond their control. Apparently mandated expansions of sex-offender treatment programs and services for disabled inmates will require additional administrative positions.

So let me get this straight — the DOCS administration is being forced by government to create high-paying jobs within their department? Those poor people #... at Christmas, no less!

I mean, is that seriously the argument? The guards should be so lucky!

After all, what good are sex-offender treatment programs if there aren't people to guard the sex offenders? If you ask me, the best treatment for a sex offender is locked up, far the heck away from me.

I'm not without compassion for the incarcerated, but if the state is creating programs at the administrative level, you can bet dollars to doughnuts that someone at the, shall we say "non-administrative level" will have to administer the programs.

As it is, correction officers are stretched paper-thin across the state. So these programs, no matter how beneficial they may seem on paper, will only make more work for the guys and gals in the trenches, the prison guards.

So the next time there is a prison riot and our hometown lads and lasses are in danger, I don't want to hear that the prison was understaffed because DOCS was forced, against its will, to expand administrative positions. Because that is a bunch of bologna.

Administrators are supposed to guide their employees toward common goals and objectives. Fewer employees equal fewer administrators. When DOCS adds more positions at the bottom, then they can add more people at the top.

Until then, I'm sticking with the union.

Estabrook's column appears

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The Auburn City Council recently proposed a resolution that would establish a moratorium on having to use the parking kiosks on Genesee and State streets during winter months.

The council asked City Attorney John Rossi to author a resolution that can be discussed and voted on at its next meeting.

The rationale behind the moratorium is that the kiosks are often buried in snow, and that motorists have to walk through dangerous ice and snow to get to them.

There is also a feeling that the kiosks may be too complex for some residents to use.

Frankly, I think closing kiosks in the winter is a ludicrous idea.

Snow is a nuisance, but I don't think that getting to the kiosks is truly an insurmountable challenge.

First and foremost, shop keepers have a responsibility to keep the walkways in front of their businesses clean and dry.

If there is an issue in getting businesses to adhere to code, then the shop owners should be reminded of the policy and if necessary penalized.

And as for the dangers of people having to walk to the kiosks, according to Section 44-6 of the Municipal Code, any dangerous sidewalk conditions or accident resulting from dangerous conditions is the liability of the property owner.

If you ask me, that is pretty good incentive for store owners to keep the sidewalks in front of their stores cleared.

And to address concerns that the kiosks may be too complicated for some residents: if you can't figure out a parking kiosk than you probably shouldn't be operating a moving vehicle.

The city has discussed the possibility of imposing a 90-minute time limit for parking while the moratorium is in effect. But I question the feasibility of enforcing this measure.

And in a time when every penny counts, why lose the revenue? No matter how marginal, parking meters accumulate some money for the city.

The only valid reason to consider such a ridiculous moratorium is that it would encourage people to come downtown to eat and shop during the busy holiday shopping season. But no one is thinking about the struggling store owners.

This initiative seems to have come about because no one wants to deal with the hassle of winter weather.

If you don't want to deal with snow, then you're living in the wrong region.

Bottom line: if the city wants to remove something, they should work on removing the snow, not the kiosks.

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