

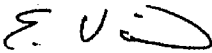


STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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May 12, 2009

TO: All Offenders and Family Members

FROM: Eldon Vail, Secretary
SUBJECT: IMPACTS OF 2009-2011 STATE BUDGET

The Legislature recently approved a budget for fiscal years 2009-2011, and as expected, the Department of Corrections – along with all other state agencies – will be required to make significant changes amid the national financial crisis. We are in the early stages of figuring out how these changes will impact staff and offenders and we don't have a lot of details yet, though I do want to share with you what we know at this point.

These were some of the most difficult choices Washington Legislators have faced in generations, and in the face of a historic \$9 billion budget shortfall I believe they made the very difficult decisions while keeping in mind the goal of community safety. As a result of their choices, by the end of the next budget cycle, in June 2011, we will have fewer offenders under community supervision and fewer inmates in prison as well.

The day after the budget was approved we formed work groups to determine how we will implement these changes. These are tasks that we have never before been asked to carry out so it will take us time to figure out how we will proceed. We will update you as decisions are made and plans are developed.

In the meantime, here is a brief description of some of the impacts on prisons, community corrections and offender programs:

Prison Division

The Legislature did not approve any early releases for offenders, though some low-risk offenders who have extraordinary medical conditions will be placed under close community supervision instead of being in prison. The reason for the expected decline in our prison population is not because we are releasing large numbers of offenders early. Instead, new laws will mean fewer offenders will enter prison in the first place.

For example, we will increase the number of beds available in the community for offenders sentenced under the Drug Offense Sentencing Alternative (DOSA).

Also, effective July 1, 2009, a new housing voucher program will result in more offenders being released closer to their earned-release date and fewer offenders being released homeless.

All of these moves will ultimately result in fewer offenders in prison. We will need to close two living units by June 30, 2010. We are in the process now of determining which prisons that will impact. The Legislature directed us to close prisons during the second year of the biennium, between July 2010 and June 2011. Which prisons will be impacted depends on a study that is being conducted now.

Community Corrections Division

By 2011 there will be about 9,000 fewer offenders under community supervision. Beginning in August, the Department of Corrections will no longer supervise most low and moderate-risk offenders, though we will continue to supervise sex offenders and serious violent offenders for all risk levels. The Legislature also reduced the length of supervision for many offenders.

Offenders and their respective courts will be notified when their community supervision is scheduled to end. Offenders must continue to follow the terms of their community supervision unless they are notified otherwise by DOC.

Offender Programs

The Legislature decreased funding for our reentry programs by \$8 million. We currently are at work to determine how we will implement this reduction.

Amid this recession, families and state government alike are making decisions we've never had to make before. We have no choice but to reduce our spending to ensure that we operate within our budget. However, none of these cuts will change our mission to help make our communities safer.