



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

P. O. Box 41101 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1101 • Tel (360) 725-8200
FAX (360) 664-4056

January 6, 2009

Dear Family and Friends:

By now I expect many of you in the community of family and friends of those incarcerated in and supervised by the Department of Corrections have heard about the budget challenges that we are facing. You may have concerns about the impact on individuals some of these budget challenges might bring. The purpose in writing today is to share with you what we know and to emphasize the difference between what we plan to implement in the relatively near future and what may or may not come to pass depending upon the actions of the coming legislative session that begins on January 12, 2009.

First, it is important to understand that the Department is challenged to finish this current fiscal year within our budget allocation, which ends on June 30, 2009, and we are implementing several actions in short order to make certain that we do. These activities are best referenced in my attached memo to DOC staff dated December 19, 2008.

One of the places where we are making some changes is in health services. I want folks to understand we will not compromise quality of health care as we implement efficiencies within this area.

Regarding the transfer of inmates from one prison to another, we do anticipate that while this might bring some individuals closer to home, it may also place others farther away. We will carefully consider hardship requests as we make individual decisions about who is placed where but in the end I am certain we will not be able to accommodate all the requests we receive. As too many of you are painfully aware, this state has not built prisons near centers of the population.

In order to save the utility costs associated with unit laundries, we plan to eliminate personal clothing for inmates. The plan is not yet final but the commitment to make a significant change in this area is very real. We do plan for a slow implementation of this initiative and it will likely take a year before it is accomplished.

What is not in the December 19 memo to staff is that we do plan to increase the amount of money from the Offender Betterment Funds devoted to transportation of families to visit their loved ones in our institutions.

Also being discussed is the possibility of raising the charge for participating in the Extended Family Visit program but no final decisions have been made yet to do so.

Again, it is important to understand that these changes and the others listed in my December 19 memo are changes we are moving forward to implement now.

"Working Together for SAFE Communities"

Then comes the potential impact of next biennium's budget on agency operations. That process began with the Governor's budget proposal, which she released on December 18, 2008. On that same date I sent the attached memo to DOC staff to highlight the potential impacts to our Department. It is really important to understand that none of what the Governor has proposed is real until it emerges in the budget that will be produced at the end of the upcoming legislative session, scheduled to end in April 2009.

What the Governor's budget mainly proposes to do is reduce the size of the caseload of the Department by changing the law so that fewer people will be incarcerated and fewer persons will be subject to supervision in the community. It remains to be seen what the Legislature does with those ideas the Governor's budget puts on the table.

What her budget also does is propose to reduce the increased funding for reentry she provided two years ago by 50%. Please understand this does not reduce reentry funding by 50%, only the 25 million dollar increase she provided in the budget for 2008 and 2009 is decreased by 50%. Unfortunately, if that part of the budget does come to pass, it will put many of our family programs at risk. We will work hard to find ways to maintain our focus on friends and families but it would change the way we go about doing so.

This is a difficult time for all of the citizens in Washington State. As a Department, we understand that incarceration is difficult on families. We appreciate the benefits of a strong, maintained family unit, and are considering options that will continue to support efforts to link the incarcerated with their loved ones. We are thankful for the support and service provided by community based and religious organizations.

Information will be shared consistently with family members participating in facility and statewide advisory boards. The work of these boards has been and will be instrumental in advising the Department and making recommendations about the impact our policies have on families. As the situation further unfolds, we will work to keep you advised and informed as we try to mitigate the impacts of a very difficult budget reality through postings on the Internet Family and Friends site at www.doc.wa.gov/family and via communication bulletins such as this.

I wish you well in this difficult climate.

Sincerely,



Eldon Vail
Secretary


EV:dg
Attachments



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

P. O. Box 41101 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1101 • Tel (360) 725-8200
FAX (360) 664-4056

December 18, 2008

TO: All DOC Staff

FROM: Eldon Vail, Secretary
SUBJECT: **Governor's Budget**

Today Governor Gregoire released her proposed 2009-2011 Biennial Budget. It is unlike any other I've seen. Because of a \$5.7 billion dollar revenue shortfall, the state is required to take drastic cuts affecting all of state government. Entire programs for some of the most vulnerable citizens are being eliminated, including universal vaccine coverage for children, vision and hearing services for Medicaid eligible persons and medical coverage for unemployable adults. Additionally, there is a 40% cut to the state basic health plan for the poor. The cuts being made across state government are deep and wide.

DOC is subject to reductions as well. The Governor's budget proposes a reduction of approximately 125 million dollars in DOC spending for the biennium. To give a measure of perspective, the Department of Health sees a reduction of 75 million and DSHS nearly 1.3 billion in reduced expenditures.

To achieve the reduction in DOC, the Governor proposes significant sentencing changes affecting the number of offenders in prison and under supervision and calls upon the Department to continue to identify and achieve increased administrative efficiency.

In Community Corrections this would be accomplished by a combination of discontinuing the supervision of low and moderate risk offenders and eliminating all supervision of offenders not convicted of a felony. In addition, the term of supervision that may be ordered for an offender convicted of a sex offense will be reduced from a range of 36-48 months to 36 months; the term of supervision that may be ordered for an offender convicted of a serious violent offense will be reduced from a range of 24-48 months to 36 months; and all other offenders, if otherwise eligible for supervision, would have a term of 12 months of supervision. The effect would be a substantial reduction of the number of offenders on supervision and consequently the number of staff required to supervise them. The total estimated impact of all sentencing changes affecting Community Corrections is about 12,000 fewer offenders and 400 fewer staff.

For prisons, the Department would continue to incarcerate the most dangerous offenders. There are sentencing changes proposed which would reduce the number of offenders in our institutions

by deporting all non-citizen drug and property offenders, expanding the Extraordinary Medical Placement program and reducing sentence length for some drug offenders.

In addition to these sentencing changes, the number of offenders forecast to be incarcerated is lower, which means there will be more beds than offenders. The reduced forecast and the Governor's budget proposal will require us to close one entire institution and take living units off line in others. We project the closure of Pine Lodge Corrections Center for Women and the conversion of Larch Corrections Center to a female facility.

Our current plan is to bring offenders back from out-of-state and to open the new facility at Coyote Ridge, as previously planned.

Funding for re-entry is reduced by about 50% of the increase funded in the last biennium. While final decisions have not been made, we anticipate that the programs forced to go will be those that fall into the "promising practices" category such as the Job Hunter program and many of the family and parenting programs. Even taking those programs off line will not be enough, however, to achieve the reduction. We will also be required to reduce expenditures in our core evidence based programs, education, and chemical dependency treatment.

Nevertheless, even though we are required to reduce programs in some areas, we will continue to actively work across divisions to maximize the remaining reentry investments. The linkage between these programs and improved public safety has been well documented and we will continue our focus in this area.

The above proposed changes add up to about 111 million dollars. Also in the budget is a one percent reduction of 14 million and it is not specified how it will be achieved. You can trust that our efforts to become more efficient will continue as a result.

The Department will take steps between now and the time that the final budget passes to minimize the impacts on permanent staff, in the event the proposed changes are approved. The steps implemented may include not deploying newly funded staff positions, holding vacancies or filling with temporary staff when possible.

While the upcoming year and budget cycle will be difficult, we will work together to find the best way to implement any changes and will do our best to minimize the impacts of these changes to individual employees. Tomorrow we begin that process with scheduled meetings with the Teamsters and the Federation.

Please understand this is the beginning of the budget process. Next month the legislative session begins and many options in addition to these will be considered. At this time no one can predict what our budget will look like when it is passed in April, but the changes coming to the agency are likely to be significant.

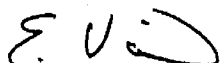
EV:dg



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

P. O. Box 41101 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1101 • Tel (360) 725-8200
FAX (360) 664-4056

December 19, 2008

TO: All DOC Staff

FROM: Eldon Vail, Secretary
SUBJECT: **Proposed Changes and Reductions**

Yesterday I wrote to you about the Governor's budget. Since then, your Superintendents and Field Administrators have had briefings and been given more detail about those proposed reductions. They will be talking with agency supervisors with the expectation that we get as much information throughout the agency as we can. Today meetings were scheduled with both the Teamsters and Federation (the Federation meeting was rescheduled to the first week in January due to the weather) to talk about those proposed changes and the reductions necessary to close the books on this fiscal year, which ends on June 30, 2009. Today I write to share with you the steps necessary for us to reduce spending so that we can live within our operating budget. They are significant as well. Here are some highlights of those reductions:

--At Headquarters we will reduce staffing by another 40 FTEs. This reduction includes losses in Health Services, including an Assistant Secretary; in payroll, in IT, in the Emergency Response Unit, in Human Resources and in Prison Administration. Employees impacted by this item are being notified this week.

--Our Health Services administration has identified \$3 million in savings they will achieve through further elimination of contract nursing positions, improved utilization management and a reduction in pharmacy costs, especially psychotropic medications.

--We are eliminating our Headquarters high school intern program.

--All pay raises, including progression pay, for WMS and Exempt staff are frozen until further notice. If there is a rare need for exception, it will be approved only by me.

--Our Hearings Unit will begin conducting telephone hearings for the majority of our Community Corrections violation hearings in order to reduce staff and save travel costs.

--We will cease all ACA activities statewide. The audit at MICC will continue because we have paid all the expenses.

"Working Together for SAFE Communities"

--We will replace contract services with state staff to perform pre-employment psychological evaluations.

--We will begin the process to eliminate inmate personal clothing in most, if not all, our state prisons.

--We will reduce or eliminate firearms training in some state prisons.

--We will centralize both the payroll and accounts payable functions.

--We will close Unit 5 and either Unit 1 or Unit 4 at the Washington State Penitentiary.

--We will temporarily close one unit at the camp at Coyote Ridge. The unit will close at the same time we open one of the new units which will reduce the impact on staff. The unit at the camp will re-open when Pine Lodge shuts down.

--We plan to move close custody offenders from Monroe to Walla Walla and mediums from Walla Walla to Monroe which will allow us to achieve staffing efficiencies at both institutions.

As you can tell from this list, the situation is serious. More information on each of these items will be shared over the coming days and weeks. It is imperative that we make these reductions. Failure to get them accomplished will result in the need for even deeper reductions in even shorter time frames.

Over the past year I have written to you about how proud I am of the work done by DOC staff and how I feel honored to serve as your Secretary. On days like today and yesterday I still feel that way, despite knowing that the cuts we must make will have an adverse impact on too many people. Nevertheless, I am confident that if we work together, we can minimize the impact on individuals and emerge as a stronger, albeit leaner, Department of Corrections.

EV:dg