



AFGE Local

Council of Prison Locals #33, AFL-CIO

Facility Type, Town, State



Date

TO: The Honorable **Congress Member's Name**
FROM: **Your Name and Title**
SUBJECT: **Potential Government Shutdown**

Dear **Congress Member's Name**:

I represent # staff members at **Facility Type** in **Town, State**. I am writing to you to express the concerns of those employees regarding the looming threat of a government shutdown.

The operations of Federal Bureau of Prisons have been crippled by the lack of funding for FY 2011. The absence of an FY2011 budget has led to a hiring freeze and the inability of the BOP to activate new facilities that are desperately needed to alleviate the overcrowding in the federal prison system.

The growing federal prison population and prison crowding continue to be a major concern for the Bureau of Prisons. Over the past decade, the number of inmates held in BOP facilities grew from 125,560 in 2000 to nearly 210,000 by the end of 2010. Despite the increase from 97 to 115 in the number of facilities operated by the BOP during that same time period, prison crowding grew from 32% to 37% over rated capacity, with high security facilities averaging 52% above capacity. Due to this constant influx of federal offenders, the BOP is dependent on appropriate levels of Buildings & Facilities (B&F) funding in order to open up new bed space to accommodate the growing inmate populations. The BOP has requested \$66.9 million in its Salaries and Expenses account (S&E) and \$170.0 million for the B&F account to acquire, renovate, and operate a high-security prison in Thomson, IL. According to the BOP, the Thomson prison would add up to 1,600 additional high-security beds to the federal prison system. Proposed FY2011 funding for the Bureau of Prisons included a 170.5 million dollar increase in our B&F budget. That level of funding would allow the BOP to purchase and activate Thompson, as well as activate and staff the two completed facilities at Mendota, CA and Berlin, NH, bringing 3,000 medium security beds online; both facilities are sitting empty at this moment, their activation frozen because of the current CR. An increase in B&F funding will also facilitate the purchase of the high security prison facility in Thomson Illinois, adding a desperately needed 1,600 high security beds to the BOP and helping to mitigate the fact that high security prisons in the BOP are currently operating at over 52% of their rated capacity nationwide.

The current hiring freeze, brought on by the absence of 2011 funding, has only exacerbated the dangerous rise in the ratio of inmates over staff. Over time, staffing levels have not kept pace with the increasing number of inmates placed in our system; by the end of 2010, the BOP system was staffed at an 89% level (35,839 of 40,279 authorized positions were filled), as contrasted with the 95% staffing percentage levels in the mid- 1990s. This 89% staffing level is below the 90% staffing level that the BOP believes to be the minimum staffing level for maintaining the safety and security of BOP prisons. In his statements made in 2009 before the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, Bureau of Prisons Director, Harley Lappin testified, “Our analysis revealed that a one percentage point increase in a facility’s inmate population over its rated capacity corresponds with an increase in the prison’s annual serious assault rate...” The current BOP inmate-to-staff ratio is 5 inmates to 1 staff member, as contrasted with the 1997 inmate-to-staff ratio of 3.7 to 1.

In order to return to the safe ratio of staff to inmates that the agency operated under for decades, we would ultimately need to hire over 9,000 new staff. We understand that in these challenging times, all federal agencies will be asked to operate with the utmost efficiency. The funds originally proposed for FY2011 appropriations for the Bureau of Prisons included monies to hire 1,200 new staff members in a modest effort to offset the ever-increasing federal inmate population. As new adult offenders continue to pour into the federal prison system, we don’t believe that we can operate safely without the funding for additional staff. If the Bureau of Prisons is unable to secure the funding needed to hire and train a sufficient number of correctional workers, it will become increasingly difficult to properly supervise the offenders in our custody.

As a member of Congress, we recognize that you are in a position to help us with these issues. On behalf of the employees at our facility, I respectfully ask that you assist us in whichever way you can to secure a reasonable and prudent level of funding for the 2011 fiscal year without further delay or, even worse, a government shutdown. Considering the current state of the Bureau of Prisons, we cannot realistically continue to operate safely without your help. I honestly do not believe that our agency can accomplish our mission continuing to operate at 2010 appropriated funding levels. Further delays in receiving 2011 appropriations, or even worse, a government-wide shutdown, would make it increasingly impossible for us to do so.

If you have any questions, you may contact me in the following ways:

Union Office Phone: #
Union Office FAX: #
Cell Phone: #
Work E-mail: [Your BOP Email](#)
Home e-mail: [Your Union Email](#)

Thank you for your assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Your Name
President, AFGE Local #
Facility Type
Town, State
Council of Prison Locals