



## **Council of Prison Locals C-33**

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The Council of Prison Locals, American Federation of Government Employees, represents nearly 30,000 staff members of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. These employees work in very difficult and challenging situations, walking one of the toughest public safety beats in America. We would like to take the opportunity to bring an important issue to your attention that affects this group of sworn Federal Law Enforcement Officers nationwide.

### **The Bureau of Prisons: Overcrowded, Understaffed and Underfunded**

Today, nearly 210,000 prison inmates are confined in the 115 correctional institutions that make up the Bureau of Prisons, up from 25,000 in 1980, 58,000 in 1990, and 145,000 in 2000. Over the next two years, it is expected there will be as many as 215,000 inmates incarcerated in BOP institutions nationwide, with the current rated capacity for all Bureau of Prisons facilities at only 149,070 inmates. The constant influx of inmates into the system without appropriated funds to construct or open new facilities is likely to result in the BOP operating at over 40,000 inmates over rated capacity by the end of 2012. Our most dangerous levels of overcrowding are occurring at the agency's high security facilities; currently, those prisons are operating at an average of 52% over capacity. 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..." Included in the BOP FY2011 budget recommendations from both the Senate Appropriations and the House CJS Appropriations Subcommittee was specific funding to open and staff two newly constructed facilities, FCI Mendota, CA and FCI Berlin, NH. Additionally, the recommended budget contained the funds to purchase the Thompson High Security Prison from the state of Illinois, and to purchase a medium security facility in Standish from the state of Michigan. These already constructed facilities would provide up to 5,800 desperately needed beds, critical to assuage the overcrowding of the federal prison system. Director Lappin also testified, "In order to reduce crowding, one or more of the following must occur: construct additional institutions (and fund the necessary positions and other operating costs for these facilities); expand inmate housing at existing facilities; ...or reduce the number of inmates or the length of time inmates spend in prison."

*"Gain Strength Through Unity"*

This explosion of the inmate population in the federal prison system is completely out of the hands of the staff whose sworn mission is to ensure the offender's confinement. The steady inmate population increases are the result of lawmakers passing stricter anti-drug laws in the 1980s that involve mandatory minimum sentences. Examples include the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, The 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, The Omnibus Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988. These changes in the law created a series of sentencing structures that include mandatory enhancements ranging from 5 to 20 years. In one case, legislators doubled the existing 10-year mandatory minimum for anyone who engages in a continuing criminal enterprise, requiring a minimum 20-year sentence in such cases. The Council of Prison Locals has no objection to being 'tough on crime,' we only ask that legislators give full financial support to the enforcement of the laws that Congress has passed.

In addition, the number of federal correctional officers who work in BOP prisons is failing to keep pace with this tremendous growth in the prison inmate population. 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 BOP believes to be the minimum staffing level for maintaining the safety and security of BOP prisons. Also, 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; if we wished to return to the safe ratio of staff to inmates that the agency operated under just over a decade ago, it would require the hiring of over 9,000 staff. The proposed FY2011 appropriated funds for the Bureau of Prisons included monies to hire 1,200 new staff members in an effort to offset the ever-increasing federal inmate population. 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.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the constituent representative(s) who meets with or contacts you, or feel free to contact me as well.

Sincerely,



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