



## Council of Prison Locals C-33

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[www.cpl33.info](http://www.cpl33.info)

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 Reality of a Two-year Hiring Freeze in the Federal Bureau of Prisons**

There are unavoidable consequences to the BOP that will result from the two year hiring freeze ordered by the Attorney General, Eric Holder, on January 21, 2011. As a result, The Bureau of Prisons will not be able to open its two most recently constructed facilities, FCI Mendota, California and FCI Berlin, New Hampshire, or to purchase and staff the high security facility in Thompson, Illinois. The BOP desperately needs the nearly 4600 inmate beds that would be made available by staffing and activating these facilities.

Federal Bureau of Prisons facilities are already operating at 40% above rated capacity for inmate population, with our high security facilities operating at 52% over capacity. Members of the 112th Congress have already indicated they will seek a reduction in the federal workforce to 2008 levels. Even freezing staffing at current levels would place our Agency, which is already in distress due to an unprecedented inmate to staff ratio, in a very dangerous and volatile position. For the first time in the history of the BOP, we have reached a ratio of 5 inmates to one staff member; the majority of other public correctional systems in the United States, whether state, county, or municipal, consider a safe inmate to staff ratio to be between 3/1 and 3.5/1. In the field of public corrections, a ratio of 5/1 is a universally recognized dangerous and unsustainable ratio of inmates to staff.

*“Gain Strength Through Unity”*

In 1990, there were only 58,000 inmates incarcerated in the Federal Bureau of Prisons; it is projected that there may be as many as 215,000 inmates in our custody by the end of 2012. Currently, the Bureau of Prisons is staffed with 37,544 employees. From 2006 to 2010, the inmate population grew by a rate of 7 inmates for every one staff member hired to offset the increase in inmate population. Even if the hiring freeze allows for Correctional Worker vacancies caused by retirement, resignation or reassignment to be filled, by 2012 that same ratio of inmate to employee growth will have increased to nearly 16/1 over a seven year period. The Bureau of Prisons will see as many as 13,000 staff reach eligibility to retire over the next several years; if those positions are not filled, the gap in growth between the inmate population and the staff that supervise them will be even more unmanageable.

The projected number of incoming inmates for the next two years is approximately 14,500 inmates, with no additional Federal Bureau of Prisons bed-space likely to become available for that period. As of January 27, 2011, total BOP inmate population was 209,812, which is 22,522 over the current total rated capacity for all Bureau of Prisons facilities. By the end of 2012, the already drastically overcrowded federal prison system will likely have more than 40,000 inmates above its rated capacity. With inmate overcrowding comes significant increases in safety and security risks; to fail to increase the staffing required to appropriately manage the federal inmate population would be unwise and potentially deadly.

In the near future, you may be asked to vote on legislation that would freeze hiring in our agency; we respectfully request that you take into account the cost of staff safety, the BOP's ability to provide a safe and humane environment for the inmates, and the safety of the communities we serve. The Federal Bureau of Prisons currently houses some of the most violent offenders in our nation. We ask only that you take an in-depth look into any proposed legislation prior to placing our staff and communities at further risk.

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,



Michael Meserve, National Legislative Coordinator

Council of Prison Locals

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