

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

East Bay sheriffs say jails have space but no money for state's excess inmates

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 05/28/2011 05:57:00 PM PDT

Updated: 05/29/2011 05:35:54 PM PDT

East Bay jails have beds but no cash to take on the hundreds of inmates the state is expected to divert to counties as California tries to meet court-ordered prison population reductions.

"Counties have been promised money from the state before and have not always received the money as promised," said Alameda County Sheriff Greg Ahern. "We are looking for full funding and constitutional guarantees of continued funding."

Sheriffs are "literally meeting every week with (Gov. Jerry Brown) and his staff to make sure there is going to be adequate funding to absorb these prisoners into the local jails," said Contra Costa County Sheriff David Livingston.

Last week's U.S. Supreme Court decision launched Ahern and Livingston, who oversee a combined 6,700 jail beds, into the front line of accelerated talks over how California will resolve its pernicious prison overcrowding problem.

The justices ruled that the state's glutted prisons constitute cruel and unusual punishment.

Brown this year introduced what he called "realignment," shifting responsibility from the state to counties starting July 1 to jail and monitor low-level, nonviolent felons to save the state money and to ease prison overpopulation.

Counties could also receive some offenders in state custody. The state must shed 33,000 inmates over the next two years in order to meet the court ruling.

The Legislature adopted realignment as part of the state budget.

But without highly disputed extensions of the vehicle license fee and sales tax, there will be no money to implement it.

Without a constitutional guarantee of funding, the next Legislature faced with deficits could raid the realignment account and leave counties paying for hundreds or thousands of inmates.

That's the sticking point for sheriffs such as Livingston and Ahern.

Without money, they cannot afford the added inmates. Recessionary budget cuts have already stressed their departments.

But if they don't take the offenders, the courts could order their immediate release.

Dozens of felons could return to the East Bay, but largely without the benefit of re-entry and rehabilitation programs that help them find and qualify for jobs and avoid returning to prison.

Alameda and Contra Costa counties have room for more inmates but realignment would push them close to their capacities.

Contra Costa has 1,900 beds in three jails -- Martinez, Marsh Creek and Richmond -- and an average daily population of 1,700. Realignment would bump that number by as many as 250.

Alameda County has 4,800 beds in its Dublin and Oakland jails, and an average daily population of 4,000. The county estimates its share of new



HEARTLAND QUALITY
OMAHA STEAKS
SINCE 1917

SAVE
up to **64%**

Plus, get
3 FREE Gifts

Special Code: 45069ZWN

To order: www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71
or call 1-877-605-0496

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

inmates will range from 300 to 800 in the next 18 months.

The state proposes a reimbursement rate of \$68 a day per inmate, a figure Ahern describes as inadequate. Livingston views it slightly more favorably.

California pays counties \$77 a day to hold state inmates during court hearings. Many of the 600 to 750 state inmates in Alameda County jails, for example, are convicted felons rearrested on parole violations who await hearings.

"The \$77 a day is only 90 percent of what it costs to house the inmates and provide medical care," Ahern said.

The rate doesn't cover facility maintenance, security equipment such as cameras and computers and groundskeeping.

It also doesn't pay for re-entry programs that reduce recidivism, a major contributor to the state's overpopulated prisons. Without effective rehabilitation, the state prison overcrowding problem will simply move into county jails.

Alameda County jails will be at capacity in three years if no effective re-entry programs are in place for the added inmates, Ahern said.

Contra Costa County recently adopted a re-entry strategy to reduce the numbers of convicted criminals who re-offend but it has no money to implement it.

Neither sheriff anticipates increased jail security problems as a result of mingling state and jail inmates.

Contact Lisa Vorderbrueggen at 925-945-4773, IBAbuzz.com/politics or [Twitter.com/lvorderbrueggen](https://twitter.com/lvorderbrueggen).

Get a FREE ADT-Monitored Home Security System.*

(With \$99 customer installation and purchase of ADT alarm monitoring services. See important terms and conditions below.)

Call Now! 1-877-835-8373




*\$99.00 Customer Installation Charge. 36-Month Monitoring Agreement required at \$35.99 per month (\$1,295.64). Form of payment must be by credit card or electronic charge to your checking or savings account. Offer applies to homeowners only. Local permit fees may be required. Satisfactory credit history required. Certain restrictions apply. Offer valid for new Security Choice - An ADT Authorized Dealer customers only and not on purchases from ADT Security Services, Inc. Other rate plans available. Cannot be combined with any other offer. **\$100 VISA® Gift Card Offer: \$100 VISA Gift Card is provided by Security Choice and is not sponsored by ADT Security Services. Requires mail-in redemption. Call 1-888-407-2338 for complete restrictions and redemption requirements.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™