

Sign In | Register | Newsletters

Part of the Bay Area News Group

Mobile | Mobile Alerts | RSS

Home News My Town Sports Business Entertainment Living Columns Opinion Help



Jobs Cars Homes Classifieds Shop

SEARCH Site Web Search by YAHOO!

Walnut Creek, CA Now:65°F High:68°F Low:56°F city or zip

0

Share

0

Recommend

Send

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

Contra Costa Times editorial/slideshow: Hope for prison reform, but many challenges

Contra Costa Times editorial
© Copyright 2011, Bay Area News Group
Posted: 10/02/2011 04:00:00 PM PDT

Advertisement



Tap In BayArea
Know more. Enjoy more.

Find:

in:

15% Off Any Repair from European Auto Clinic of Pleasanton : Expires 12/21/2011

\$50 Donation from B & S Hacienda Auto Body Paint of Pleasanton : Expires 12/31/2011

[Dining](#) | [Ads/coupons](#) | [Claim Your Listing](#)

Most Viewed

- (From the last 12 hours) [RSS](#)
- [Oakland Raiders notebook: Coach Hue Jackson, players blame...](#)
 - [Bay Point woman fatally shoots 23-year-old man during 'domestic...](#)
 - [HCG: A dieter's dream?](#)
 - [Concord transient arrested after running from police, hiding in bushes](#)
 - [Poole: San Francisco 49ers QB Alex Smith answers critics with best...](#)
 - [Kawakami: Oakland Raiders quarterback Jason Campbell not up to...](#)

Often real political reform requires necessity as motivation for action. In the case of prison reform, California has a couple of necessity-driven motivators: fiscal austerity in a prolonged weak economy and a judicial mandate to correct inmate overcrowding.

As part of a budget agreement to cut costs and to comply with a court order to reduce the state's prison population by 30,000, California has begun to shift responsibility for incarcerating newly convicted, low-level offenders from prisons to county jails.

Gov. Jerry Brown euphemistically calls it a bold new relationship between state and local governments. What it really is is an uncertain experiment in dealing with a massive inmate population while trying to balance a state budget that is facing even more revenue restrictions than forecast a few months ago.

By placing more inmates in county jails, California can start to reduce the inmate population in state prisons. Also, the hope is that local governments will be able to house inmates in a more cost-effective manner than the high-price state prison system.

Some county law enforcement officials have called the realignment of prisoners an opportunity to reduce the state's unacceptably high 70 percent recidivism rate.

Local governments will have more flexibility to deal with prisoners than the state did and can try different ways to rehabilitate inmates.

Critics of the reform like state Sen. Sharon Runner,

Advertisement



ECCO WALNUT CREEK
BROADWAY PLAZA
23 BROADWAY LANE
WALNUT CREEK 94596
925 946-4674

19 63
eccosung.com

ecco

R-Lancaster, fear that local government will be fiscally overwhelmed if new revenue from voter-approved taxes is not forthcoming. She called the realignment dangerous and said public safety will be increasingly compromised.

Her concerns are understandable. Success of the reform depends heavily on whether counties are able to sustain the expense of additional prisoners or if they will be motivated to release inmates early.

County law enforcement officials are hoping for a constitutional amendment to assure ongoing funding for local governments. Brown has vowed to seek such an amendment next year, but he has not outlined a framework for it. He also is expected to ask voters to raise taxes, but has not said if tax hikes would be tied to an amendment.

There is also the concern that treatment of inmates might vary widely from county to county and that state standards will be a thing of the past.

We understand that there is considerable uncertainty about the outcome of what Matt Cate, secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, says is "one of the largest public safety and statutory changes in California's history."

However, California cannot continue to run its vast, costly, dysfunctional prison system as it has in the past. With proper funding, we are hopeful that the new reform will succeed. See our photo slideshow on a new day for state prisons at www.contracostatimes.com/opinion or follow JDHatfield at twitter.com

Reprint BOOKMARK Print Email Font Resize Return to Top

You Might Be Interested In:

- [Driver struck and killed after getting out of car on I-680 shoulder \(News - ContraCostaTimes.com\)](#)
- [Masked group robs Walnut Creek gas station \(News - ContraCostaTimes.com\)](#)
- [Contra Costa Times Readers' Forum: Sentencing reform needed to stop prison crowding \(Opinion - ContraCostaTimes.com\)](#)
- [Contra Costa Times Readers' Forum: Sentencing reform needed in wake of Supreme Court ruling \(Home - ContraCostaTimes.com\)](#)
- [California High football team holds off Foothill, 22-17 \(Home - ContraCostaTimes.com\)](#)

From Around the Web:

- [Economist Who Predicted the 2008 Crash Gives Chilling 2012 Forecast. See the Evidence. \(Newsmax.com\)](#)
- [School Lunch vs. Lunch Box: The Cost Analysis \(MyCareOne\)](#)
- [ExxonMobil's earnings: The real story you won't hear in Washington \(ExxonMobil's Perspectives\)](#)
- [Can You Undo Years of Bad Health Habits? \(Lifescript.com\)](#)
- [Ex-Employee Wiped Financial Data From Bikini Bar \(CIO\)](#)

[what's this]

FAQ: Article commenting how-tos and tips

Recommend Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

 Add a comment...

Post to Facebook Posting as Paul Adler (Change) **Comment**

Facebook social plugin

News»

- [North Bay couple avoids grocery stores for one year](#)
- [Authorities ID burglary suspects killed in Oakland crash](#)
- [BoFA website malfunctioning again](#)
- [Police: Parolee kidnapped Sonoma woman trying to help him](#)
- [Homeless activist says he is innocent of Santa Clara County computer hacking charges](#)
- [Woman with Santa Cruz County roots featured in horse-riding TV contest](#)
- [Supreme Court roundup: selling software on eBay, Obama's birthplace and more](#)

Recommendations

- [De La Salle taking on top team Friday in Florida](#)
Angelina Adler Kosich and 2 others recommend this.
- [California policymakers weigh Obama's No Child Left Behind proposal](#)
Allen D Payton and 6 others recommend this.
- [Now you see it, now you don't: beaver removed from Martinez mural](#)
Lara DeLaney and one other person recommend this.

Facebook social plugin

Top Classifieds

RENTALS JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

- [MCKEE/Mabury 3/2 new kit, ...](#)
- [WILLOW GLEN....](#)
- [EAST SJ 3/2, 2 car gar 1250 ...](#)
- [ALUM Rock 3 Br 2 Ba cozy ...](#)
- [HAYWARD](#)
- [SJ West, 3Br/2Ba, 2 Car Gar...](#)
- [S'VALE 3/2 Lg 4plx unit LR/D...](#)
- [SANTA Clara 1/1, Up- stairs,...](#)
- [All Listings](#)

Nobel Foundation confirms award to dead Canadian scientist

[Home](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Place an Ad](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Find Walnut Creek Jobs](#) | [Site Map](#) | [RSS](#) 



©2011 Bay Area News Group | [Terms of Use/Privacy](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help](#) | [About our Ads](#) | [About Bay Area News Group](#)



A  **MediaNews Group** WEBSITE