

Prison News and News Articles About / For Correction Officers: { Page 48 }

ARTICLE LIST:

[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2000](#)

[Transfer Freeze](#)

[Are NY prisons more violent now?](#)

[Indoor smoking ban looms for inmates](#)

[N.Y. Inmate who held reporter hostage disciplined](#)

[State's inmate population to decrease](#)

[Prison officials deny growing, gang activities on the rise](#)

[Officials begin preparing for fewer inmates](#)

[State shrugs off McCall's call to assess guard-inmate ratio at Charleston prison](#)

[Impasse is over](#)

[Bill would allow parolees to vote](#)

[New York Prison Inmates Pay Dearly to Call Home](#)

[Prison commissioner a man of mystery](#)

[Back to the Titles](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2000

Department of Correctional Services

Glenn S. Goord, Commissioner

Contact: Spokesman James B. Flateau at 518-457-8182

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2000

Governor's prison policies succeeding in "right sizing" the system

Focus on locking up violent felons is reducing the need for beds for nonviolent felons

Governor George E. Pataki is redefining the state prison system through his policy of "right sizing," increasing the need for maximum-security cells for violent offenders while decreasing the need for medium-security housing for nonviolent offenders, Commissioner Glenn S. Goord said today.

"Right sizing" - the lengthening of sentences and elimination of discretionary parole for violent offenders

coupled with alternative programs for certain nonviolent inmates - has contributed to an average rate of growth of less than 2 percent annually in New York's prison population between December 1994-99.

By comparison, the average rate of growth over the same five-year period was 5 percent annually among all state prison systems. The U.S. Bureau of Prison's population has increased by an average rate of more than 7 percent annually since 1995. (End-of-year data is the latest available for other jurisdictions.)

A look behind New York's prison growth numbers offers a more detailed look at how "right sizing" is affecting the crimes for which inmates are under custody. From December of 1994 through September of 2000, the New York state prison population grew from 66,711 to 70,327, an increase of 3,616 inmates. That is reflected in a:

9 percent increase in under custody violent felony offenders, from 34,485 to 37,579. 1.6 percent increase in under custody nonviolent felony offenders, from 32,226 to 32,748, and a 6.9 percent decrease in under custody drug offenders, from 23,083 down to 21,500. Commissioner Goord explained, "One side of Governor Pataki's "right-sizing" program led to our construction of 4,950 maximum-security prison beds - the largest such expansion in state history - to take custody of violent 'state readies' and to house in disciplinary units those offenders who become disciplinary problems once they enter state prison. The other side of 'right sizing' led to our programs that will allow 36,832 nonviolent offenders to earn early release from April 1995-2001, through their participation in meaningful rehabilitative programming."

These programs, limited to only certain nonviolent offenders, allow them to earn release prior to completion of their court set minimum sentences. They include:

Shock incarceration (the six-month "boot camp" program in which the Governor raised the age limit to allow older participants while modifying the physical standards to allow participation by the disabled), Merit time (allowing inmates to earn a one-sixth reduction in their minimum sentences) and The Willard Drug Treatment Campus (allowing many offenders to undergo 90 days of intensive drug treatment instead of an average return of nine months to a general confinement prison). Commissioner Goord noted that of those 36,832 inmates earning early release, 5,480 of them would still be housed in medium- or minimum-security prisons next April 1 if not for those programs. That means "right sizing" obviated the need to construct 5,480 lower-security beds. Not having to house those nonviolent inmates, coupled with the construction of 4,950 maximum-security beds to meet the need for space to house violent offenders, has led to a drop in the prison population.

As a result of "right sizing" the system for both violent and nonviolent offenders, the state's 70 prisons are projected to house approximately 2,423 fewer inmates on April 1, 2001, compared to the April 1, 2000, start of the current fiscal year, Commissioner Goord said.

If the projected decline in the under custody population occurs, it will bring the population down from 71,423 inmates on April 1, 2000, to a projected 69,000 inmates on April 1, 2001. Today's under custody inmate population is 70,634, a decrease of 789 since April 1.

Commissioner Goord said, "These numbers show the decrease in the inmate population is already occurring at facilities around the state. Today, I have ordered a freeze on all staff hiring at 14 targeted medium-security prisons that have double bunks. As employees attrit out of those 14 facilities, I will reduce the inmate population at each of them, allowing some of those top bunks to be vacated at all 14 facilities. This will make those facilities even safer and easier to manage while placing less stress on their physical plants."

The 2,423 top bunks to be vacated will be from among the 3,496 now in place at these prisons: Albion (180), Altona (240), Cape Vincent (420), Cayuga (420), Collins (276), Gowanda (300), Lakeview (60), Marcy (420), Monterey (50), Moriah (50), Orleans (420), Riverview (420), Ulster (60) and Watertown (180).

The staff hiring and transfer freeze will not affect the remaining 56 correctional facilities, where staff vacancies will continue to be filled, Commissioner Goord said. Critical exceptions that will be filled at the 14 targeted facilities include, for example, cooks and power plant operators.

Commissioner Goord said, "Any changes in the number of arrests, indictments, convictions or parole release rates will affect new commitments and our projections. We will monitor them and continue to plan accordingly. As a result, while we plan to vacate 2,423 top bunks, the physical beds will remain in place. That means we will have the space available to accommodate any unexpected increase in new commitments. It will also give us something we have never had before: vacant but usable space immediately available in case of an incident or any other emergency for which we might have to relocate a large number of inmates.

"As the population decreases this fiscal year," Commissioner Goord added, "we plan to attrit staff from the targeted facilities through voluntary reassignments coupled with the effect of normal attrition that averages 600 employees a year and the hiring freeze now in effect at those 14 facilities. The net effect of voluntary reassignments, attrition plus the hiring freeze cannot be predicted among a statewide workforce of 20,600 uniformed and 12,150 civilian employees."

Commissioner Goord explained, "That's because I intend to examine staffing and ensure that we retain all the staff we need to operate our facilities safely and securely after the inmate reduction. There is no formula that says we will attrit staff by x for each y drop in the population. We will review the needs of each facility. No exact budgetary implication can yet be attached to the plan. That will be driven by when the population decreases and the workforce attrition occur."

The plan also affects county jails across the state. The number of "state readies" housed in county jails has declined from a record high of 4,425 in July of 1999 to 942 today. The number of "state readies" will continue to decline if projections hold true through April 1, 2001.

Projections for future changes in the inmate population are currently being formulated. Those calculations will be included in the Governor's Executive Budget proposal for next year's fiscal 2001-02 spending plan that will be presented to the public and the Legislature in January.

[Back to the Titles](#)

Transfer Freeze

Oct 20, 2000

TO: All Supt.

FR: Glenn S. Goord
Commissioner

RE: Bed takedown and hiring freeze at 14 facilities

The following is to be read at line ups for the next 72 hours upon receipt:

I publicly announced today that we expect the in-house medium-security inmate population to drop by approx. 2,423 inmates by April 01, 2001, end of current fiscal year.

We will accommodate that inmate reduction by vacating 2,423 top bunks among the 3,500 top bunks now in place at dormitories in 14 targeted medium-security facilities. I have therefore ordered a hiring freeze, effective today, at those 14 facilities. For the rest of this fiscal year, as employees attrit out of those 14 facilities, we will reduce the inmate population. The hiring freeze will prevent any transfers in to the targeted facilities.

The 14 facilities where I have today frozen hiring are: Albion, Altona, Cape Vincent, Cayuga, Collins, Gowanda, Lakeview, Marcy, Monterey, Moriah, Orleans, Riverview, Ulster and Watertown.

Both security and civilian staff on existing transfer lists into any of the targeted 14 facilities may, of course, leave their names on those lists if they desire to do so. However, staff is advised that no items will be filled in the foreseeable future from any list for any reason at the targeted facilities.

Every employee's personal situation is different. But with this information, each employee can make an informed decision as to whether they want to remain on a transfer list into those 14 facilities, or if they would rather place their names on the transfer in lists of the 56 facilities not affected by the freeze. The same applies to any one of the 14 facilities in a temporary position.

Any employee with questions about this policy should contact their facility personnel office.

[Back to the Titles](#)

Are NY prisons more violent now?

Represents more violent now Albany training staffing domains are being made a state prisons that our rash of violent episodes Are prisons more violent now?

ALBANY: Training and staffing demands are being made at state prisons after a rash of violent episodes.

By Matt Smith and John Milgrim
Ottaway News Service

She can't use her name - the employee handbook says she could lose her job.

But she's spent her career patrolling the halls of maximum security prisons in the mid-Hudson region, and she'll tell you: The threat of violence is with her every moment.

"Sometimes it's more, but it's never less," said the correction officer.

A rash of episodes at state prisons has brought demands for more training and better staffing:

Officers assaulted at Otisville and Sing Sing. A guard and deputy superintendent stabbed at Green Haven. Warning shots fired at Southport and Auburn. A stabbing and biting incident at Southport.

In the most notorious incident, a Court TV producer was taken hostage at Clinton Correctional Facility

during an interview with convicted killer Kenneth Kimes, before prison staff distracted Kimes and wrestled him to the ground.

That incident came on the heels of an October meeting between state officials and the state's prison guards' union, concerning a string of violent episodes in New York prisons.

Attacks have raised tension

During the last two years, two inmates have died, nearly 20 inmates and eight staff members have been injured, and warning shots have been fired at least twice.

Together, the incidents have heightened tensions in the 24,000-member New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association.

Complaints like these are common at contract negotiating time. But the union is expected to ratify a four-year contract at the end of this month, according to union spokesman Denny Fitzpatrick.

"We're quite satisfied with the contract; negotiations are over, so it's not a contract thing," he said yesterday.

The union is especially worried about the freedom inmates are given during press interviews.

"This is the only time an inmate has attacked a reporter," said James B. Flateau, spokesman for the state Department of Correctional Services. "The closest thing to it was when (killer) Willie Bosket in Shawangunk was being interviewed by a reporter (in 1988) and, we think, just to impress the reporter, he jumped up from the table and stabbed an officer in the chest with a homemade shank."

Inadequate manpower, according to Larry Flanagan, chief steward at the "maxi-maxi" Shawangunk Correctional Facility, is a big concern.

"Absolutely, absolutely," he said yesterday. "The big message (from the state) is keep overtime to a bare minimum, and that has an effect."

Flateau disagreed.

"The officer did the best thing he could possibly do by backing off and calling for help," Flateau added. "If there were more officers in the room, how could that have made a difference?"

The biggest cause of violence

Cutbacks and downsizing also make it easier for inmates to obtain contraband drugs – the biggest cause of violence in the prisons, in Flanagan's estimation.

"That's the No. 1 thing behind the assaults – gang wars over drugs that result in assaults on the staff," he said.

The state needs to get more aggressive about preventing the flow of contraband drugs into the prisons, and that means spending money on equipment and training, Flanagan said.

"They'll (prisoners) get it any way they can – even put it in a baby's diaper," he added. "We need more monitoring."

Robert Gangi of the Correctional Association of New York, a prisoners' advocacy group, says there's reason for concern.

Though Gangi, whose group often goes inside prisons to serve inmates, was not ready to say today's prison environment is more violent, he did say that the prisons are "more tense."

Flateau: Prisons are safer now

Flateau believes New York's prisons are safer now than they have been in more than a decade.

"The number of assaults on staff last year was the fewest in 14 years," he said.

According to DOC figures, there were 762 assaults on staff last year compared to 963 in 1998 and 985 the year before that. The drop is more dramatic when compared to 1990's figure of 1,277.

Meanwhile, inmate-on-inmate attacks also decreased. From 1995 to 1999, those assaults have gone from 1,741 to 1,098.

The drop in violence comes at a time when New York's prison population is at its highest in history. Ten years ago, there were 55,600 inmates. Now there are 71,200.

Flateau added, "I don't think the public would be amazed to learn there is violence committed by violent prisoners."

Dave Melendez, a union steward at Beacon Correctional Facility, has been a correctional officer for 13 years, and he's got the scars to prove it.

"There's assaults all the time," he said yesterday. "The department doesn't want people to know."

Record staff writer Jeremiah Horrigan contributed to this report.

[Back to the Titles](#)

Indoor smoking ban looms for inmates

Albany: Prisons in the state have been given ample warning about an indoor smoking ban that goes into in fact January 1st.

State authorities are tightening restrictions on inmates access to tobacco as the deadline approaches for a ban on smoking insight prisons.

A regulation went into effect last week scaling back the amount of cigarettes, cigars and loose tobacco inmates are allowed to get in packages set into them from the outside.

The restrictions are one of the last steps the state will take before banning smoking outright by prisoners iand staff anywhere in prisons start in January 1st.

"Right now inmates can smoke outside and in their housing units," state prison spokesman James Flateau said. " Effective is the first of the year, they can smoke only outside. As a result of that, inmates while we had a need for his many smoking supplies. This is the reason for more decreasing the amount they can have."

The state Departmental of Correctional Service announced the impending smoking ban in July 1999 under a phased-in schedule that started to go into a effect Jan. 1 2000. Since July 1, inmates had been able to smoke only in assigning sleeping areas or outside.

After Jan. 1, inmates will be able to smoke only in exercise yards and other outside areas of state prisons. The ban does not include smokeless tobacco.

State Prison Commissioner Glenn Goord said the smoking ban makes sense on several levels: To complied with federal court decrees in state laws which restricts smoking indoor; to reduce tensions be between smoking and non-smoking inmates; to reduce the risks of fire and to improve the health of state and inmates.

The smoking rules apply to all 71,000 state prison inmates and 30,000 staffers.

Flateau said prisoners generally accept the idea that an indoor air smoking ban is a step whose "time has come."

Robert Gangi, head of the state Correctional Association prisoner advocacy group, said prison officials have acted properly by giving inmates nearly 18 months' warning very.

"They have offered help to inmates who were smokers to break the habit and have given people plenty of lead time to get ready for it", Gangi said. "We have heard no complaints from prisoners about it. That does not mean, however, that there aren't pockets of real resistance to it and resentments towards it."

Courts have mandated that all inmates in prisons get at least one hour about exercise time outside every day. For inmates in disciplinary housing units, that will be their only time to smoke after Jan. 1.

Inmates in general prison populations typically can have access to outside areas for many more hours each day if they choose, Flateau said.

"I think it is a great idea to kick Joe Camel out of correctional facilities in the state," state Sen. Michael Nozzolio, a Seneca County Republican who is chairman of the Senate's corrections committee. "This state should not be established a smoke zone in our prisons when we are established during smoke-free zones in the rest of the state."

Under this latest tobacco restrictions, inmates can not receive packages each month with more than three cartons of cigarettes in them (down from the previous four cartons); they cannot get more than 50 cigars (down from 100 cigars), and they cannot get more than 24 ounces of loose tobacco (down from 36 ounces).

[Back to the Titles](#)

N.Y. Inmate who held reporter hostage disciplined

From: stlnet.com 10/24/00
Oct. 23, 2000 | 8:41 p.m.

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) -- A convicted murderer who held a pen to the neck of a reporter during a prison interview and held her hostage for four hours will spend his next eight years in disciplinary housing,

confined to his cell 23 hours a day.

Kenneth Kimes, who along with his mother is serving a life sentence for the murder of a New York City millionaire, was being interviewed inside the Clinton Correctional Facility Oct. 10 when he grabbed Court TV reporter Maria Zone.

Kimes held the pen to Zone's neck and demanded his mother not be extradited to California to face charges in another slaying for which both mother and son could face the death penalty.

Guards were able to tackle him after about four hours and free Zone.

Kimes was found guilty of charges including assault and possession of a weapon for the attack. His mother, Sante Kimes, was also placed in disciplinary housing for six months after guards searched her cell and found a pen she had fashioned into a weapon.

New York Gov. George Pataki said last week that both would be extradited.

[Back to the Titles](#)

State's inmate population to decrease

ALBANY: The pending release of 2,500 will drop The state's inmate population below 70,000.

By Matt Smith

Ottaway News Service

Times Herald-Record October 22, 2000

Nearly 2,500 nonviolent felons are expected to be released from the state prison system come April 1, lowering New York's inmate population to under 70,000 for the first time in three years.

And because the inmate population will decrease at the 14 medium-security prisons, Corrections Department Commissioner Glenn Goord has ordered hiring and transfer freezes at those facilities.

Ulster Correctional facility will be one of 14 prisons statewide that will see a drop in the number of prisoners. Corrections officials late last week said 60 beds will be vacated at Ulster as part of the downsizing, which will free an estimated 2,423 inmates in all.

Goord said the inmate releases "will make those facilities safer and easier to manage, while placing less stress on their physical plants."

Dennis Fitzpatrick, spokesman for the 24,000-member New York Correction Officers and Police Benevolent Association, said the announcement should not adversely affect the prison-guard union.

"We're running at 130 percent capacity," he said of the prison system. "What they're talking about is debunking, which is not a hurt to us.

"There's not going to be any layoffs or transfers. where the freeze comes from is that there won't be transfers into those prisons.

"In some respect, it's good news," Fitzpatrick added. "They're debunking facilities that are overcrowded.

But who knows what's going to happen in 2001?"

Prison officials attribute the pending inmate releases to the Pataki administration policies that now keep violent felons behind bars longer, such as ending parole for violent felons.

To accommodate those policies, the state has built 4,950 maximum-security beds in recent years - thus freeing up double-bunk space in medium-security prisons where many violent criminals were held.

Goord said another result of the Pataki policies is that 36,832 nonviolent offenders will be given the chance to earn early releases by taking part in rehabilitative programs.

Those include six-month shock incarceration; 90-day drug treatment programs; and earning merit-time, which knocks off one-sixth of their minimum sentences.

Still, Goord said that despite the upcoming drop in the inmate population, the state will keep the open beds in place to accommodate "any unexpected increase in new commitments."

[Back to the Titles](#)

Prison officials deny growing, gang activities on the rise

Albany: The Correction Department also rejects charges by the prison-guards union that staffing is inadequate.

By Matt Smith

Times Herald-Record October 23, 2000

Drug and gang activity in the state prison system are not on the rise, contrary to recent claims by New York prison-guards union, state Correctional Department officials said last week.

Correction officials also rejected charges that staffing is inadequate, maintaining that New York's ratio of guards to inmates is better than the national average.

The criticism directed at the state comes on the heel of recent spate of violence in prisons throughout New York, including the stabbing of two staff members at Green Haven Correctional and a television reporter being taken hostage by convicted killer Kenneth Kimes at Clinton Correctional.

Friday Gov. George Pataki announced they Kimes and his mother, Sante - both of whom are imprisoned for killing Manhattan socialite Irene Silverman - will be extradited to California to face murder charges there for allegedly killing their 64-year-old business partner. Both mother and son could face the death penalty.

Dennis Fitzpatrick, spokesman for the 24,000-member New York Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association, said the violence inside New York's prison system is often the result of increase in gang and drug activity.

He also said officers need better training to combat the problems.

Meanwhile, union stewards in both the North Country and mid-Hudson - were roughly a third of the state 70 prisons are located - have claimed manpower levels are insufficient to deal with New York's 71,200

inmates.

But while Correctional Department spokesman James Flateau acknowledged the presence of drugs and gangs in prisons, he said state statistics don't support the union charges. In fact, he said, the numbers show a downward trend.

"We happened to think our officers have the training to do a very good job of drug detection," Flateau said. "We conduct 96,576 inmate drug tests last years, and 4200 came back positive."

"That's a percentage of only 4 percent to 5 percent. To suggest there's an overriding drug problem in the prisons is not true."

"As for gangs," Flateau said, "if an officers sees an inmate engaging in gang activity, they write that inmate up."

"Is (Fitzpatrick) suggesting employees are witnessing gang activities and not writing it up? If so, then his issue is with employees, not management."

Flateau said that in 1995, there were 1,156 gang incidents, and those numbers peaked three years later, reaching a total of 1,876.

But through this year, even with the prison population increasing by 5 percent compare with 1995, there have only been 1,126 gang-related incidents, state records show.

Flateau also rejected claims that staffing is inadequate.

According to the Connecticut-based Criminal Justice Institute Inc. correction yearbook, as of Jan. 1 1999, the nationwide ratio comparing prison staff with inmates was one officer for every 5.9 inmates.

In New York , that ratio is one officer to every 3.5 inmates.

Still, guards are not the only one complaining about today's prison environments.

Inmate advocates, such as the Correctional Association of New York's Robert Gangi, have blamed tensions on the cuts in educational programs, claiming prisoners are more idle now.

"That's a fallacy," Flateau insisted.

Though he acknowledged that the prison system has cut vocational teaching jobs, he said inmates academic enrollment is up 25 percent compared with five years ago, and vocational enrollment is up 8 percent.

"You look at how many inmates are in programs, not how many teachers we have," he said. "In the past, our class sizes averaged 12 to 15 inmates. We increased that over the past few years to about 2p.

"We are not a employment agency."

[Back to the Titles](#)

Officials begin preparing for fewer inmates

Analysis: The state seems to be taking some baby steps toward downsizing state prisons.

By Joel Stashenko

The Associated Press Times Herald-Record October 24, 2000

The downturn in New York's prison population may be a statistical aberration, or could be a long-range trend with far-reaching ramifications for the state's criminal justice system and budget.

Either way, state prison officials say they're going to start downsizing by clearing up to 2,400 top bunks of the 3,500 double bunks currently in place and 14 medium-security prisons around the state.

As guards retire, resign or transfer out of the 14 prisons in coming months, inmates will be moved from the top bunks in the populations in the barracks-styled dormitories at the prisons will be reduced.

This is not a dramatic step, not like the closing of the prison or of entire prison cell blocks. But it holds at least the promise of more ambitious contractions in what has become one of the most expensive of all state ventures - the incarceration of criminals.

The state prison system will cost taxpayers to \$2.3 billion this fiscal year, or about as much as state taxpayers are contributing towards the operation of the State University of New York in the city University of New York systems.

It cost roughly \$29,700 to incarceration each inmate each year.

But the projections this plan is based on - that the state had 71,400 inmates behind bars on April 1, 2000, and will have 69,000 on March 31, 2001 - represent a meaningful trend.

Inmate reductions are the result of several factors, including prison time-saving regimens like "shock" incarceration camps and diverting some inmates to non-prison settings like the Willard Drug Treatment Center, officials said.

Prison population reductions are also allowing the state to hack away at the nettlesome problem of excepting in a timely fashion inmates who are bound for state prison. County sheriffs have complained for years about having to keep "state ready" prisoners in jails while waiting for state prison space to open. From a high of 4,400 in July 1999, the number of state readies has been reduced to 940 today with further reductions likely by next April 1, prison officials say.

It may not seem like it, but New Yorkers have gotten away cheaply state prison cost. Though the prison population in New York has grown to 71,400 this April from about 55,200 in 1992, that was hardly in the league of Texas, for the prison population grew to 150,000 from 50,000 during the same period.

California's state prisons, with just under 150,000 inmates, now cost that state's taxpayers \$4.6 billion a year.

The state Department of Correctional Services is not speculating about how long the projected inmate reductions will continue past April 1, 2001, and what other downsizing moves might be made.

Spokesman James Fleteau said Gov. George Pataki's proposed 2001-02 budget, to be released in January, will contain updated inmate projections.

The head of an inmate advocacy group, Robert Gangi of the state Correctional Association, said the scaling back of double-bunking and the trend towards fewer inmates are good signs. But he argued that a more fundamental consolidation of the system cannot happen until the state revises its drug sentencing statutes to give more discretion to judges and fewer mandatory, long-term sentences to lower-level offenders.

Mandatory sentencing laws "will continue to cause a steady stream" of inmates to come into New York state prisons, Gangi said.

[Back to the Titles](#)

State shrugs off McCall's call to assess guard-inmate ratio at Charleston prison

October 26, 2000

By ROBERT GAVIN
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Joined by Staten Island lawmakers and union delegates who say a shortage of officers has made Arthur Kill Correctional Facility a "time bomb waiting to explode," state Comptroller H. Call McCall yesterday called on the Pataki administration to examine the safety of the prison.

"We have a serious problem," McCall said, standing outside the medium-security Charleston jail. "We believe the staffing here is not adequate to provide the levels of security that they should have."

Correction officer union delegates standing with McCall, a potential Democratic candidate for governor, said only two of the facility's six watchtowers are manned full-time, and another is occupied only part-time. The other three towers are always closed, they said.

"I'm very concerned with the closing of the [watch] towers. That is the only line of defense we have with the public," said Edwin Mercado, vice president of the state Correctional Officers Police Benevolent Association, Southern Region.

The officers said a "roving patrol" was to be increased when the watchtowers were closed at Arthur Kill, but that never happened.

Officers also say there is no supervision of a prison program in which inmates refurbish Board of Education desks and chairs for schools. They called it a "great program," but said it gives the inmates access to chemicals and tools that could potentially be used for ill.

Moreover, officers and officials charge Arthur Kill has more mentally ill prisoners than other medium-security facilities in the state. There are also more violent inmates -- including murderers and rapists -- in the prison now than ever before, they say. More drugs are getting into the prison as well, and gangs, such as the Latin Kings, Bloods, Crips and Netas, have an increasing presence in Arthur Kill, according to the officers. Heroin smuggling and assaults on officers have been reported in the facility this year.

"We're at the point right now . . . Arthur Kill is a time bomb waiting to explode," said John Schiavone,

Staten Island delegate to the state Correctional Officers Police Benevolent Association.

Schiavone and local lawmakers expressed concern after the state shut down on Sept. 15 a program at the prison in which prisoners answered phones for the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). The unit was closed when computer discs were found on inmates who work in the call center, including a convicted killer.

The discs contained computer games, screensavers and memorabilia from the DMV, but prisoners never accessed motorists' personal records, DMV officials said. The state's investigation into the matter ended earlier this month. The DMV call center reopened Oct. 2.

Now, McCall said, he wants Gov. George E. Pataki and the state Department of Correctional Services (DOCS), which runs Arthur Kill, to examine the security concerns. But it did not appear yesterday that the Pataki administration would jump at McCall's beckon.

"We look at prisons all the time. We don't need the comptroller, who goes into a prison once every 10 years [explaining] how to assess prison staffing," said Jim Flateau, a spokesman for DOCS. "We're there every day."

Flateau questioned why McCall could not provide more specifics for his concerns. The watchtowers, he said, need only be manned when prisoners are in the yard.

Flateau said McCall was acting after hearing "one side of the issue" -- that of correction officers.

"Arthur Kill is a safe and secure institution," he said.

According to DOCS, there are 762 inmates in Arthur Kill prison. Security -- correction officers and their supervisors -- accounts for 332 of the 440 employees in the facility, an agency spokesman said. Flateau said in New York state prisons there is one correction officer per 3.5 inmates, while the national average is one officer per six prisoners.

That would put Arthur Kill staffing at a better-than-normal staffing level. But correction officers paint a different picture.

Schiavone, the Staten Island prison union delegate, disputed Flateau's numbers. He said there are 322 correction officers in the prison. And he put the prisoner tally at well higher than 900.

"There's no three-to-one [ratio]," Schiavone said. "It's more like 50-to-one at minimum."

Prison superintendent Dennis Breslin used an estimate of 975 inmates when he spoke to the Advance for an unrelated story earlier this month. Breslin referred calls yesterday to the DOCS public information office.

Schiavone noted officers do not all work the same days and shifts. On a given night shift in the prison gym, he said, a correction officer might find himself supervising as many as 200 inmates.

One lawmaker in attendance, Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano (D-Mid Island), said he was concerned about the security of prisoners when they leave the facility for medical reasons. Vitaliano was joined at the press conference by outgoing Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly (D-North Shore) and the Democratic candidate vying to replace her in Albany, John Lavelle, the borough's Democratic party chairman. His Republican opponent is Robert Helbock.

Neither the Island officials nor McCall toured the prison, which they say they had planned. They said they were spurned by prison officials, who would not allow them inside alongside union representatives. Flateau said the prison was following long-standing policy.

Vitaliano called the correction officers "our eyes" into the prison and accepted their take of the facility.

"My reaction has always been the same," he said. "These are the men and the women who are in there. If they think there's a problem, I'm worried."

"The biggest concern is they have concerns," said McCall.

[Back to the Titles](#)

Impasse is over

10/28/00

Guards, police OK pact with 13%, 4-year raises

By JOHN MILGRIM

Ottaway News Service

ALBANY - State correction officers ended an 18-month labor rift Friday by voting more than 2 to 1 for a four-year labor pact that gives them raises surpassing the cost of living but misses on some of the issues that kept the deal from happening sooner.

"It's as fair as we're going to get at this time," said Andy Guynup, an officer at Clinton Correctional Facility near Plattsburgh.

The deal, approved 14,053 to 6,800, gives state correction officers, Environmental Conservation officers and university campus police officers a total 13 percent in raises over four years, retroactive to October 1999.

Prison guards have been without a contract since April 1999, and earlier this year their union, the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association, declared an impasse.

An earlier contract offer was narrowly defeated in July by a vote of 10,960 to 9,746.

State and union officials at the time said the reason for the defeat was concern over health care and disciplinary procedures.

Members who were opposed to that tentative contract wanted the same type of protections enjoyed by police and firefighters, who cannot be suspended without pay for more than 30 days before being found guilty of wrongdoing.

The deal approved Friday held the same salary and bonus figures as the July pact.

"I don't think it was by far an outstanding contract nor do I think it was a really poor contract. I think it was a middle-of-the-road contract," said Tyler Smith, NYSCOPBA's chief steward at Clinton. "We didn't make the headway we really wanted."

NYSCOPBA spokesman Denny Fitzpatrick said the new contract calls for expedited disciplinary hearings within 60 days of an unpaid suspension and that a member's health insurance stays intact during that suspension.

Now, however, the union members will have to pay for a portion of their prescription plan.

"It isn't the whole ball of wax but it's certainly close to it. It's far greater than what we had before," said Fitzpatrick.

Union officials said the officers with the most time on the job fared best in the contract, with Guynup explaining that North Country prisons tend to draw the more senior officers.

"From my facility, the majority of the people I've spoken with were no voters," said Mike Mazzella, the NYSCOPBA union steward at Green Haven Correctional in Stormville. But, "I'm glad it's over so we can move on and pursue binding arbitration."

The new contract gave those with at least 20 years on the job a \$1,000 boost to their base salary.

NYSCOPBA has 24,000 members statewide.

[Back to the Titles](#)

Bill would allow parolees to vote

From: rochesternews.com 10/29/00

By Yancey Roy
Albany bureau

ALBANY (October 29, 2000) -- About 128,000 New Yorkers will not be able to vote this Election Day because they are either in prison or on parole, prompting one lawmaker to sponsor a bill that would make New York the 15th state to allow parolees to vote.

"When prisoners re-enter society, we want them to be better citizens. And a way to be more involved in society is by voting. The most civic thing you can do is vote," said state Sen. Tom Duane, D-Manhattan, who is sponsoring the bill.

In contrast, some New York legislators think there should be more restrictions on voting -- like requiring an ex-felon pay restitution before being allowed to vote again.

The surge in disenfranchised citizens gained national attention two years ago when Human Rights Watch, along with The Sentencing Project, issued a report showing 3.9 million Americans had no right to vote. Of that number, 36 percent were African-American -- a rate far outstripping the proportion of black men in the nation.

"It's had a disproportionate impact on racial minorities," said Mark Mauer, assistant director of The Sentencing Project, which studies the criminal justice system.

States vary widely in how they treat prisoners, parolees and those on probation when it comes to voting rights.

Three states -- Maine, Massachusetts and Vermont -- allow prisoners to vote. Massachusetts has a referendum this Election Day on whether to take away that right.

On the other end of the justice scale, 13 states bar felons from voting for life. Although most of the states are in the South, the list includes Iowa, Nevada, New Mexico and Wyoming.

New York allows ex-convicts to begin voting again once they've either completed parole or finished their prison sentences.

As a result, 128,000 people or about 0.9 percent of the adult population cannot vote. That's lower than the national average of 2 percent per state.

Among black men, 6 percent in New York cannot vote compared with 13 percent nationally.

Despite New York's lower-than-average percentage, advocates still have concerns. They say that the disenfranchised prison population and general skepticism about the political system helps fuel low voter turnout among minorities. And low turnout means minority issues don't command as much attention when the state Legislature is in session.

"Black males don't vote in great numbers because so many are alienated from the system," said Alice Green, director of the Albany-based Center for Law and Justice and a vocal opponent of the state's prison expansion. "Some of the conditions that lead to criminal behaviors can't be brought to attention if we don't have vote power."

Green and others said easing voting restrictions on parolees is one step toward helping ex-convicts become a constructive force in the community.

But some politicians disagree, feeling that people who commit felonies must forfeit at least their voting rights -- maybe for extended periods after parole.

"An individual who has lost (voting) privileges has done so because of some heinous behavior," said Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-Fayette, Seneca County, chairman of the Corrections Committee. "They really have not proven they've earned (the privilege back) until parole is finalized. My preference would be to put additional restrictions, like making compensation to victims. That would demonstrate genuine rehabilitation.

"As long as I'm chairman," Nozzolio concluded, "I don't envision any expansion of prisoners voting rights."

Duane strongly disagrees and said he'll be working with Assemblyman Al Vann, D-Brooklyn, next year to push the bill to allow parolees to vote. He said if prisoners aren't allowed to vote when they're released, they might drop out of civic life altogether.

"It's important to get people in the habit of voting when they're released," Duane said. "If you have to go 10 years without voting, you'll never get into the habit."

[Back to the Titles](#)

New York Prison Inmates Pay Dearly to Call Home

From: newsday.com 10/30/00

IN A TINY courtroom in lower Manhattan last week, U.S. District Court Judge George B. Daniels peered down from the bench at a half dozen lawyers and an even smaller number of spectators.

It was the opening round of a lawsuit that could determine whether New York's state prison system can continue to charge wildly inflated prices for prisoners' phone calls to their friends and relatives, charges that now earn the state \$25 million a year.

And as is often the case when important issues affecting tens of thousands of low-status citizens are involved, almost no one was paying attention.

Since 1996, MCI, now known as MCI WorldCom, has had an exclusive contract with the Department of Correctional Services, which runs the state's 70 prisons, to provide phone service to the 70,000 inmates.

Under this deal, inmates can make collect calls only to people on an approved list. Collect calls cost significantly more than direct calls. In addition, the Department of Correctional Services requires that MCI WorldCom pay the department 60 percent of its total income from the phone calls.

As a result, the recipients of inmate phone calls pay a huge surcharge for the calls, much higher than what a person living across the street from the prison would pay for the same call. They are charged 60 percent more than both the cost and the profit from the phone service combined.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit, who include inmates and their friends and families, say this amounts to an illegal tax that's being imposed on a captive and largely poor population.

WorldCom and the Department of Correctional Services have moved to dismiss the lawsuit on the grounds that it has no legal merit, and Judge Daniels heard arguments on that point last week.

Barbara Olshansky, a lawyer with the Center for Constitutional Rights, which represents the plaintiffs, said a phone system that didn't require that calls be made collect and that didn't require such a huge rebate to be paid to the state would reduce "this incredible cost that they're putting on the plaintiffs." What was clear, Olshansky, said, was that the 60 percent rebate the state collects has "absolutely nothing to do" with any special security features required in a prison phone system.

"The state has decided this is a way to raise money and we're going to raise it from the poorest citizens," Olshansky said.

But David Fernandez, one of MCI WorldCom's lawyers, compared the money the phone company pays to the state to what a concessionaire pays for the right to do business in a certain place.

The lawsuit is one of many efforts aimed at a nationwide system in which telephone companies such as MCI WorldCom and AT&T pay states huge commissions in return for charging inmates artificially high rates for long-distance calls.

Critics say the exorbitant calling charges are one example of a growing prison industry, in which states build more prisons, lock up more people for lower level crimes, and collude with private businesses to make money off the inmates and their families, who are usually poor.

This is especially burdensome in New York, where most prison inmates come from around New York City, but are incarcerated in remote towns upstate that are hard for relatives to visit.

A spokesman for the Department of Correctional Services said that collect-calling keeps the department's costs down and allows it to monitor inmate calls to prevent them from abusing the phone system, and that the money from WorldCom is used to pay for such things as AIDS services to inmates, buses to bring family members to the prisons and family outings.

But several states and the entire federal prison system are letting inmates make cheaper direct calls, using PINs, a system they say creates no additional security risks.

There are those who see nothing wrong with having prison inmates, who are lawbreakers after all, pay part of the costs of their upkeep through the high phone rates. But New York's prison phone system, as it currently exists, is sheer exploitation. Would it be right if a prison commissary charged an inmate \$10 for a toothbrush?

[Back to the Titles](#)

Prison commissioner a man of mystery

Glenn Goord, who is credited and criticized for his control of state's facilities, maintains a low profile

As commissioner of the New York state Department of Correctional Services, Glenn Goord is in charge of some big numbers: a \$1.9 billion budget, 71,000 inmates, 70 prisons and 32,500 employees.

If he were a CEO, he'd be running a corporation that would log in around the 690s of the Fortune 500's expanded list of the 1,000 largest companies, in a league that includes Dow Jones and Polaroid.

But when it comes to public visibility, Goord -- who runs the third-largest state prison system in the nation and often refers to it possessively as "my people" -- is about as out front and recognizable to the average New Yorker as a grade 12 state worker.

An up-through-the-ranks, 27-year veteran of "DOCS," the single-syllable verbal shorthand name by which the prison system is known, Goord, 49, has ascended to one of the biggest jobs in state government. Yet he holds the high-impact position in a decidedly low-profile manner.

Working mostly below the media's radar for the past 4 years -- with DOCS spokesman Jim Flateau, a Cuomo administration holdover, running interference and acting as his public voice and ghostwriter -- Goord remains largely a man of mystery.

"He's got a bunkerlike mentality as far as the press and prisoner advocates go, which I don't agree with," said Assemblyman Jeffrion Aubry, chairman of the Assembly Corrections Committee.

Aubry, a Democrat, has spent long hours in a car with Goord driving to prisons, but still, he said, has no read on the commissioner personally.

Indeed, only a cloudy portrait emerges of Goord from a recent group lunch interview just outside the razor-wire fences of a Coxsackie prison -- the only access Flateau would permit -- as well as from discussions with current and past DOCS employees, inmates and prisoner advocacy groups.

Is Goord the affable administrator: the man who brings his dog to work and allows it to roam DOCS offices as a morale booster? Or is the commissioner a tyrannical prison keeper: an executive whose policies put thousands of inmates in "The Box," the 23-hour disciplinary lockdown denounced by civil rights advocates?

Is he a smooth operator running a model prison system that is in some circles considered the best in the nation? Or is he a political appointee who does what he's told by aides to Gov. George Pataki, lacing a larger vision beyond that of a by-the-book prison logistician?

Whichever personality traits are attributed to Goord, they don't come easily from the man himself. In terms of public appearance, Flateau and Goord's other aides keep him as gray as the correction officers' uniforms.

"Glenn's just not that outgoing or comfortable being Mr. Outside like I was. He's taking the inside approach," said Thomas Coughlin, DOCS commissioner from 1979 to 1994, when the state's prison population more than tripled.

A prison drug abuse counselor with a bachelor's degree in psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University, Goord was plucked in 1980 from the anonymity of programs staff and drafted to DOCS headquarters in Albany to help write a five-year master plan for a department overwhelmed by a crime boom.

"He was a bright guy who was good at research and planning and was very valuable in the master-plan process. And that started his climb up the central office ladder," said Coughlin, who is now retired and living in Watertown, but travels frequently as a prison consultant.

Goord's tenure at DOCS is closely linked with his mentor, Phil Coombe Jr., who succeeded Coughlin as commissioner and retired in 1996 after a 36-year DOCS career. Both men commuted from Sullivan County and, as Coombe's protege, Goord moved up the chain-of-command one step behind Coombe over the years.

"Glenn developed a hands-on working knowledge of the department, moving up as Phil's assistant," said Ward DeWitt, a former DOCS deputy commissioner who now works with ex-inmates in a local alcohol and drug treatment program. "He's got the toughest job in the state because every day's a potential crisis."

Goord's association with DOCS started when he was in his early 20s, just out of college, an accident of geography. "I was making pizza in the little hamlet of Woodbourne," Goord recalled of the Catskills community in Sullivan County known for its prison. There, he met Dominic Mantello, who ran the Woodbourne prison at the time and who hired Goord in 1973.

Goord now earns \$136,000 annually. Flateau, the DOCS spokesman since 1984, makes \$102,971 as the commissioner's official mouthpiece.

It is often difficult to determine whether prison statements on policy represent the views of the commissioner or the longtime system spokesman.

At the Coxsackie lunch interview, for instance, attended by a dozen Times Union reporters and editors and an equal number of Goord's deputies and staff, Flateau frequently piggybacked on Goord's answers and attempted to clarify and re-interpret the commissioner's explanation. (Before that meeting, Flateau had helped Goord craft a seven-page letter criticizing Times Union coverage of prisons and refusing to

grant a one-on-one interview with Goord.)

"Flateau has attacked me and other advocates personally and he's very dismissive of substantive reports we issue," said Robert Gangi, executive director of the Correctional Association of New York State. "Flateau represents a knee-jerk attack dog strategy that ... does a disservice to the public."

On the other hand, Gangi, a strident voice for prison reform, praised Goord's past work. "I thought of him as a very decent man, an able professional and someone who used to have useful, informative meetings with me," Gangi said.

But Gangi's direct access to the commissioner ended after a 1999 report by the Correctional Association critical of prison health care. "I think he's operating under difficult political circumstances and is a good soldier going along with the circle-the-wagons stance," Gangi said.

Raymond Broaddus, a retired DOCS deputy commissioner for programs, said Goord found himself in a tight spot: trying to forge his own course between the long shadow cast by Coughlin and the hard-line stance seemingly preferred by the Pataki administration.

"I think Goord is a good guy who had to surround himself with tough guys to project an image of toughness," Broaddus said. "I remember Goord saying, 'I'm going to give you a direct order. I'm the commissioner.' Coughlin never had to resort to that kind of talk."

"I find Goord a pretty nondescript and unimposing fellow who is now commissioner, a position held by larger-than-life characters over the years," said Scott Christianson, a former state criminal justice official and author of books on prisons. "I think he's struggling to follow that colorful tradition." DOCS headquarters on the State Office Campus, Goord is best known for bringing his 3-year-old yellow Labrador retriever, Mogul, to work. The friendly pooch is free to roam the offices. "It's a nice change in what can be a stressful atmosphere," said Goord, noting he named his dog for the bumps on a ski slope.

Goord is not tall, about 5-9, but a husky physique and the gray beard lend him an air of toughness. Yet his voice is surprisingly soft and sibilant.

Asked about a fundamental premise of criminal justice philosophy -- whether prisons simply incarcerate or should aim to rehabilitate -- Goord declined to answer directly.

"We have no control over who comes into this system or when they leave," he said. Noting that the average time in prison among the state's inmates is 39 months, he added, "That's not much time to do everything the community couldn't do with that person before us."

Nor does Goord fault his prisons for inmates whose behavior does not improve during a prison term who return to crime.

"It's not the system's fault," he said. "I could offer them all the programs on the planet and it comes down to that person's values. Something's lacking in those people who keep coming back to jail almost as if it's their lifestyle. I have no silver bullet for that."

Goord has attempted to add a stick to the carrot of education behind bars. Prisoners who refuse to attend classes toward a general equivalency diploma (GED), as well as those who skip vocational training or fail to show up for drug treatment counseling sessions, face the loss of "good time" and a longer prison term. "I got their attention," said Goord, whose action earned him a reputation as hard-nosed among

inmates. to DOCS statistics, in the past five years academic enrollment in the growing prison system has increased by 7 percent and vocational training enrollment by 13 percent. The number of GEDs awarded has risen by 18 percent and vocational certificates is up 35 percent. The numbers only apply to secondary education; funding for higher education and college course work has been cut under Pataki.

More prisoners can't account for all of those increases. Since the start of the Pataki Administration, the state's prison population has grown, from 68,484 in 1995 to 71,472 at the end of 1999, an average increase of 1.1 percent annually, compared to 5 percent nationwide.

"He attacks issues head-on," said Melody Eldred, deputy superintendent for administration at the medium-security Greene prison and a 26-year DOCS veteran. "He's not a bureaucrat. He's in touch with his people and knows his facilities."

In departmental promotional literature, Goord takes no credit personally, but rather plays the role of good political soldier. "Governor Pataki's criminal justice initiatives have resulted in an unprecedented reduction in crime in New York State," began a seven-page section in a DOCS handbook praising the governor.

Goord's own yardstick of his work seems to be a more pragmatic one. His overriding concern, he said, is the safety of DOCS employees and prisoners. Goord cited internally compiled 1999 rates of inmate-on-staff assaults and inmate-on-inmate assaults in state prisons that are the lowest in nearly two decades. "The numbers speak for themselves," Goord said.

"I like that the commissioner is tough when he has to be, especially his zero tolerance for violence in prisons," said Israel Rivera, superintendent of Washington Correctional Facility in Comstock and a regional DOCS supervisor with 29 years in the department. "He's keeping control."

A controversial hallmark of Goord's tenure as commissioner is the sharp increase of special housing units (SHUs), 23-hour isolation and disciplinary lockdown known among prisoners as "The Box." There were 1,442 inmates in SHUs in 1997, compared to 3,581 currently, according to DOCS figures. Many of the SHU inmates are confined two to a cell in prefabricated, 120-square-foot unit with a sink, toilet, shower and two bunks.

In all, there are more than 5,700 inmates in 23-hour lockdown currently, including those on keeplock status in cells other than SHUs. Goord has repeatedly defended the SHUs as necessary to discipline inmates and to protect his staff from physically and verbally abusive inmates.

"Building more SHU cells calmed down the system. If an inmate messes up now, we have a place to put them," Rivera said.

But human rights groups have argued that such confinement constitutes cruel and inhuman punishment, in violation of the U.S. Constitution.

But if Goord has a larger vision on how to stem the tide of prison expansion in the state and nation, he was unwilling to offer it during the group interview. "I don't have an answer to why we have a growing prisoner population," he said. He added that he didn't have specific ideas for what he might do with an increase in his budget. the national scene, Goord was unsuccessful in a campaign last April for the presidency of the American Correctional Association (ACA), a professional group with 20,000 members.

"Glenn is a meat-and-potatoes guy," said Robert Verdeyen, ACA's director of standards and

accreditation, who has known Goord for several years. "His approach to running prisons is common sense. It comes down to individual responsibility."

Alice Green, founder of the Center for Law and Justice, a prisoner advocacy group, has a different take.

"He's made the department hostile territory and people are afraid to be critical or speak out for fear of being banned like I was," said Green, who Goord banned from visiting state prisoners because she allegedly helped organize a prison-wide Y2K disturbance that did not get off the ground.

Goord said he will continue to ignore her efforts to meet with him to discuss their impasse. "I have nothing to say to her," Goord said.

Green said her message as a prisoner advocate over the past 20 years has remained consistently firm, but she never received such retaliatory treatment from previous commissioners. "Goord has created a sense that he won't tolerate dissent and he rules through fear and intimidation," Green said.

Demi McGuire, who coordinates chaplains working in state prisons through the New York State Community of Churches, said she has managed to get along with Goord by not forcing his hand. "I get more by communication than confrontation," she said. "We don't always agree on the issues, but I feel he's listening and he's accessible to me."

Rank-and-file correction officers, meanwhile, fault Goord for a lack of accessibility, according to Dennis Fitzpatrick, spokesman for the New York State Correctional Officers Police Benevolent Association, the 24,000-member prison guard union.

"He says his door is always open, but only to a select few," Fitzpatrick said. "He should make himself a lot more visible and listen to the correction officers who run these facilities. We're not the enemy."

The day after the prisoner-prepared lunch with Goord and the Times Union editors, a fax arrived at the newspaper from Flateau dictating future rules of coverage: There would be no direct interviews with the commissioner in the future. read the series, "Lockdown: The hardest time," go to the Times Union Web site, <http://timesunion.com/news/special/>