

CITIZENS OPPOSED TO PRISON FACT SHEET

(www.stopnacprison.com)

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Counties *without* a prison have a higher annual rate of growth than those with a newly built prison.
- Prison construction has actually impeded economic growth in rural communities already growing at a slower pace. It appears new prisons do more harm than good.
- Over the last 25 years, growth in earnings, per capita income, and employment consistently showed relatively little economic improvement as the result of local prison construction.
- “Prison town effect”: prisons deter other desirable industry from coming to a community.
- Prisons are not good economic development strategies, as they generate few linkages to the economy and lack a multiplier effect, failing to attract associated industries in the same way as a manufacturing plant.
- Once a town becomes known as a “Prison town,” discussion of other kinds of economic development often evaporates. Prisons have a detrimental effect on the social fabric of a town.
- Prison towns deter retirees and tourism from coming to a community.
- Prison towns often only attract additional prisons to the town.

LOCAL EFFECTS

- Community drug, gang, and juvenile problems show a marked increase in towns with prisons.
- A private prison’s first and foremost goal is to make a *profit*. Thus, by definition, the safety of staff, inmates, and the surrounding community are often secondary.
- Prisons stress the infrastructure of a community.
- Light pollution, water usage, and waste water treatment, all result in a negative environmental impact.
- Local businesses seldom get contracts with prisons, thereby reducing linkage with the community.
- Prisons can drain public resources such as water, sewer, and other utilities.
- Local law enforcement is often called upon to respond to disturbances inside the prison, putting them at risk to solve problems created by the prison operator.
- Since private prison guards often do not have the same police powers that state and federal correctional officers do, many disciplinary infractions are handled by district and county courts.
- Inmate families relocate to the community, stressing social services and schools in a small community.
- Inmates will often fill low wage jobs, both in prison, and outside prison.
- Much of the money for construction of building a new prison flows out of the community.

JOBS AND THE PRISON

- Most prison jobs go to people outside the community because of prison system seniority rules; less than 20% of jobs on average go to current residents of a town with a new prison.
- There is an extremely high turnover rate of correctional officers, about 50% in private prisons.
- Correctional officers show increased rates of divorce, alcoholism, substance abuse, suicide, health problems and family violence as a result of job stress of being a correctional officer.
- Prison employees often choose not to live in a prison town, but commute.

QUESTIONS

- Where will the prisoners be released? Into the community? Where will they find jobs and housing?
- Will the prison pay property taxes? Will the city grant the private prison large tax abatements?
- Will the prison seek to expand to house even more prisoners?
- Will the prison change the type of prisoner housed? Minimum Security Today-High Security Tomorrow??
- **WILL NACOGDOCHES, THE OLDEST TOWN IN TEXAS, BECOME KNOWN AS JUST ANOTHER “PRISON TOWN”?**

Resources:

Building a Prison Economy in Rural America by Tracy Huling

Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition by Stephen Raheer

WSU (Washington State University) Researchers Find Prisons offer Few Economic Benefits to Small Towns

By Gregory Hooks, chair and professor of Sociology Dept. and Clayton Mosher, assoc. professor of Sociology Dept.
Robert Strenge, WSU News Service

Considering a Private Jail, Prison, or Detention Center?

A packet for Public Officials

Grassroots Leadership

South Texans Opposing Private Prisons

Big Prisons, Small Towns: Prison Economics in Rural America

By Ryan S. King, Marc Mauer, and Tracy Huling

Google this article: “Joelle Frazer An American Seduction: Portrait of a Prison Town”
It is a narration from a PBS television film of how a prison changed the life in Susanville, CA.