



PENNSYLVANIA STATE CORRECTIONS OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
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PSCOA CALLS DOC DECISION TO REMOVE OFFICERS
FROM TOWERS IRRESPONSIBLE

HARRISBURG (March 22, 2010) – Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association (PSCOA) President Donald G. McNany today called the state Department of Corrections' (DOC) decision to remove officers from towers at five of the state's largest prisons irresponsible.

"This decision is irresponsible and puts Corrections Officers, residents and even the inmates themselves at risk," McNany said. "Eliminating our last line of defense at a time when prison populations are on the rise and there are fewer Corrections Officers to protect us makes no sense. Once again, the state Department of Corrections has decided to put bureaucratic budgeting ahead of the lives of its officers and Pennsylvanians."

The last time DOC decided to remove officers from towers at SCI Huntingdon and Dallas in 1999, prisoners escaped. A convicted murder and a convicted arsonist escaped from SCI Dallas and were on the run for four days. Their escape route was in view of the three unmanned towers and the men became entangled in razor wire underneath a tower as they climbed an exterior fence. A convicted murderer escaped from SCI Huntingdon during the same time period.

McNany pointed out that since no positions were being eliminated, there was no real cost savings for the Commonwealth.

"In its statement, the DOC said it will save millions by making this move, but if no positions are being eliminated and they still have to pay overtime because of current understaffing, where are the savings?" McNany said. "The DOC is trying to tell taxpayers it's saving them money, but in the end they will pay with their safety."

McNany pointed out that costs related to overtime could easily be eliminated by properly staffing prisons.

"The prison population has increased by 17 percent since 2005 while the amount of officers protecting us from them has only increased by 7 percent," McNany said. "If our prisons were properly staffed, taxpayers wouldn't have to pay for overtime in the first place."

SCI Camp Hill, one of the prisons in DOC's plan, currently has fewer than 600 corrections officers are responsible for nearly 4,000 inmates at any given time, including the state's most violent offenders.

"At SCI Camp Hill, one officer is watching electronic surveillance for several cell blocks at the same time," McNany said. "It is ludicrous to think that one officer watching several blocks at a time through increased electronic surveillance and fencing is sufficient to prevent escapes or quickly respond to incidents that may happen when prisoners are on the prison grounds."

About the PSCOA

PSCOA proudly represents more than 10,000 men and women who patrol cellblocks and serve in our 27 state correctional institutions and 3 forensic units. These corrections professionals stand between those who are incarcerated – including the most violent and dangerous criminals – and our communities.

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