

COACHELLA VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

73-710 Fred Waring Dr., Suite 200, Palm Desert, CA 92260 · (760) 346-1127 · www.cvag.org



March 16, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom Governor
State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe

Dear Governor Newsom:

As the Executive Director of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments, I write in support of the City of Blythe's request that you reconsider the closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP), which is located in the City of Blythe. Closing CVSP will have devastating negative impacts to the City of Blythe, which is one of the most economically disadvantaged areas in the state, as well as impacts to the Coachella Valley and eastern Riverside County.

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments is a joint powers authority that is made up of the nine Coachella Valley cities, the City of Blythe, four local Tribal Nations and the County of Riverside. As a regional government, CVAG plans, builds and operates projects and programs of regional significance on behalf of its member agencies, to improve the quality of life of residents and visitors. As such, the closure of the CVSP will have devastating direct social and economic impacts to the City of Blythe, the Coachella Valley and the broader area of Riverside County.

Blythe is a small, geographically isolated city located in eastern Riverside County on the border between California and Arizona. Due to their isolated location, many families of incarcerated individuals and prison staff have made Blythe their home. With the current housing crisis it may be incredibly challenging for these individuals and families to afford housing in less affordable areas of the State where the prisons remaining open reside. Also, CVSP is a major employer in Blythe, employing 852 individuals, most of which reside in Blythe and the Coachella Valley. Palo Verde College, located in Blythe, will lose 250 full time equivalent students due to this closure because the college pioneered an inmate education program that has since become a statewide program. Impacts will also be felt at Palo Verde Hospital, which routinely treats patients from CVSP and is the only hospital for 100+ miles.

We strongly urge you reconsider the closure of CVSP and consult with the Cities of Blythe and Norco to arrive a more inclusive and positive solutions to this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly at 760-346-1147 or at tikirk@cvag.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Kirk', is written over a blue horizontal line.

Tom Kirk
Executive Director

cc: Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, A.D. 36
Assemblymember Greg Wallis, A.D. 47
Senator Steve Padilla, S.D. 18
Senator Kelly Seyarto, S.D. 32

