



LEAGUE OF
**CALIFORNIA
CITIES**

◆ Riverside County Division

**2022-2023
DIVISION OFFICERS**

March 27, 2023

President

Michael Vargas
Mayor,
Perris

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

Division Director

Dana Reed
Council Member,
Indian Wells

Re: Reconsideration of the Closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe

Dear Governor Newsom:

1st Vice President

Linda Molina
Council Member,
Calimesa

The Riverside County Division of the League of California Cities City supports the City of Blythe in their request that you reconsider the closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP), which is located in the City of Blythe. Closing CVSP will have a disproportionate impact on the City of Blythe, which is one of the most economically disadvantaged areas in the state and as a result the Riverside County region. We need to be lifting up communities that need assistance, not aiding them in becoming more disadvantaged. If the State is committed to closing a prison facility, the Riverside County Division of the League of California Cities supports the City of Norco in its request to have the California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) shuttered instead of CVSP.

2nd Vice President

Jacque Casillas
Council Member,
Corona

Past President

Lisa Middleton
Council Member,
Palm Springs

In our request to you for reconsideration, we encourage you to explain why CVSP was chosen for closure when it is one of the new prisons that has a robust offering of rehabilitative programming. Furthermore, the potential for job loss in the city is staggering and would be debilitating. CDCR is required to take into consideration workforce impacts when determining prison closures. 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. Blythe has the only hospital for 100+ miles. Most of their residents are without insurance or are on State- subsidized plans. Sustaining hospital operations without the prison will be challenging. The closure of CVSP could ultimately result in the loss of their community hospital, leaving thousands of residents, most of which do not have a car or the means to travel 100 miles to a hospital, without access to health care. Additionally, if the hospital were to close it would result in the loss of approximately 115 hospital employee jobs.

Furthermore, CVSP is one of the newer facilities in the State Prison System. The State recently invested hundreds of millions of dollars upgrading the HVAC system at CVSP to accommodate inmates in the summer months. Among the 12 oldest prisons are San Quentin State Prison (1852), California Men's Colony in San

Luis Obispo (1961) and California Rehabilitation Center in Norco (1941-1962), which, are located on prime real estate lands that could be redeveloped into projects that provide millions of dollars in economic investment into the State. The estimated cost for maintenance and repairs for CVSP was \$430 million, compared to \$1.647 billion for projects at San Quentin State Prison, \$1.557 billion for projects at California Men's Colony, and \$1.116 billion for projects at Norco's California Rehabilitation Center. Given the projected budget deficit, it seems prudent stretch the general fund dollars to as many areas as possible by utilizing newer facilities rather than maintaining older more dilapidated ones.

CSVP and Ironwood State Prison, which is located next door, share a Fire Department, water and sewer utilities and other plant operations and CDCR officials have stated that some of these shared services will need to remain operating at CVSP making it challenging for the site to be used for another purpose. These shared services reduce costs for both institutions. There must be more cost-effective solutions for the State than closing a newer institution in a low-cost area that leverages shared resources. There are minimal opportunities to repurpose this facility but there are ample opportunities to repurpose lands that other older more dilapidated prisons sit on. We would like to encourage you to reassess the proposed prison closure plan. Maintaining CVSP and closing CRC helps the economic viability of our region, which is crucial to maintaining the services we all want to provide.

Both the City of Blythe and Norco deserve a seat at the table and an opportunity to discuss the proposed closure and get answers to many questions they have asked. We support both cities and want to make sure our region has the resources they need to thrive.

Sincerely,



Mayor Michael Vargas
Riverside County Division President

cc: Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh
Senator Steve Padilla
Senator Richard Roth
Assemblymember Sabrina Cervantes
Assemblymember Bill Essayli
Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia
Assemblymember Corey Jackson
Assemblymember Kate Sanchez
Assemblymember Greg Wallis
Assemblymember Marie Waldron
Jeff Macomber, Secretary CDCR