



CRIME VICTIMS UNITED
The Voice for Victims and Public Safety

Stop the Closure of the Chuckawalla Valley State Prison

April 24, 2023

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

Dear Governor Newsom:

I am writing to urge you to reconsider the closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe, California as proposed in your 2022-23 State budget.

Chuckawalla Valley State Prison plays a central role in the City of Blythe's economy. As one of Blythe's top employers, the prison supplies over 850 jobs and is the main reason many residents make the City of Blythe their home. Blythe offers a low cost of living for full-time residents as well as families of the incarcerated. If inmates are forced to move, their families could face costly housing increases or even homelessness. Families of prison employees, many of which include Blythe's teachers, public servants, and essential workers, would also have to relocate.

Additionally, Blythe residents would feel the impacts of the closure through a noticeable decline in the services the City would be able to provide to address business closures, loss of related jobs in sites such as school districts, and decreased sales and property taxes from residents migrating out of the city.

The closure of Chuckawalla prison would have a considerable impact on the community and public safety. The prison provides employment opportunities for many individuals in the surrounding area. If the prison were to close, it would significantly lose jobs for the local community. From a public safety perspective, the closure of Chuckawalla prison could result in the transfer of dangerous individuals to other facilities, which could lead to overcrowding and increased security risks. Furthermore, the closure of the prison would reduce the capacity of the criminal justice system to incarcerate and rehabilitate individuals who pose a risk to society. This could lead to an increase in crime rates, as fewer individuals are incarcerated and rehabilitated potentially causing harm to the broader community. Ultimately, the closure of



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Chuckawalla prison would have significant and wide-ranging impacts on the community and public safety, highlighting the importance of careful consideration before any such decisions are made.

Currently, 22.4% of Blythe's population lives in poverty (Census, 2021) and the California State Auditor Dashboard ranked Blythe as 9th on the Distressed Cities Index, which ranks 430 California cities based on their financial health. If Chuckawalla Valley State Prison were to close, the economic effects on Blythe would be devastating.

I am not only asking to reconsider the closing of Chuckawalla but to help in the proposition of an alternative - close California Rehabilitation Center in Norco instead. Community leaders in Blythe are - unlike nearly every other prison community - enthusiastic supporters of their local prison. This contrasts Norco, California residents who have been advocating for the closure of the California Rehabilitation Center for years. As a comparatively expensive prison located in a bustling area where prison closure would not have a significant effect on the local economy, the movement to save Chuckawalla Valley State Prison advocates the closure of the CRC in lieu of Chuckawalla.

As Governor, you have a responsibility to act in accordance with the will of the people. You would be supporting a diverse coalition of Blythe residents, organizations, and legislators united around the mission to 'Save Chuck'. You can learn more about this effort at SaveChuck.org. I thank you for your attention to this important issue and implore you to take a stand for the people of Blythe.

Sincerely,

Nina Salarno Besselman
Crime Victims United President



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cc:

Senator Steve Padilla

Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia

Assembly Budget Committee

Assembly Member Philip Ting (Chair)

Assembly Member Vince Fong (Vice
Chair)

Assembly Budget Sub-Committee #5, Public
Safety.

Assembly Member Mia Bonta (Chair)

Assembly Member Gregg Hart

Assembly Member Reginald Jones-

Sawyer Assembly Member Tom Lackey

Assembly Member Joe Patterson

Senate Budget Committee Senator

Nancy Skinner (Chair)

Senator Roger Niello (Vice Chair)

Senate Budget Sub-Committee #5.
Corrections, Public Safety, Judiciary,
Labor, and Transportation Senator

Maria Elena Durazo (Chair)

Senator Josh Newman

Senator Kellv Seyarto