



RIVERSIDE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

Representing the Law Enforcement and Public Safety Professionals of the County of Riverside, California

June 5, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

The Riverside Sheriffs' Association represents over 4,500 public safety professionals in Riverside County and we are writing to urge you to oppose the closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe, California as proposed in pending 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, including 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.

As you know, police and fire departments generally comprise the bulk of municipal government expenditures and Blythe is no exception. Any significant reduction in city coffers will negatively and disproportionately impact the city's ability to continue to fund necessary public safety services. If Chuckawalla were to close, locals would face an expected downturn in the local economy, increased unemployment, a corresponding reduction in law enforcement funding and a lily increase in local criminal activity.

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.

Some have suggested an alternative - that the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco instead be considered for closure. Community leaders in Blythe are enthusiastic supporters of their local prison. This is in contrast to many residents of Norco 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 is supportive of closure of the CRC in lieu of Chuckawalla, although the RSA has no position on this proposed alternative.

As an elected representative, you have a responsibility to act in accordance with the will of the people. Please consider joining a diverse coalition of Blythe residents, organizations, and fellow legislators united around the mission to 'Save Chuck'. You can learn more about this effort at SaveChuck.org. We thank you for your attention to this important issue and implore you to take a stand for the people of Blythe.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments regarding this request. I can be reached at (916) 580-5464.

Sincerely,



Ryan Sherman
Director, Government Affairs
Riverside Sheriffs' Association