



Stop the Closure of the Chuckawalla Valley State Prison

July 16, 2024

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

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the City of Blythe I am writing to express disappointment in the announcement for the expedited closure date of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) in November 2024. This announcement comes despite extensive efforts by the City and numerous community members and organizations to prevent this outcome.

Over the past months, we have fought tirelessly through our [Save Chuck campaign](#) to highlight the economic and social impacts of the prison's closure on our community. Although we are disappointed with the decision to close CVSP, we express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported our efforts. Their dedication to our city does not go unnoticed. I am hopeful for equal support coming from the State during this transition.

CVSP has provided significant employment and economic benefits to Blythe and its residents and proven to serve as an integral asset to the community. The closure of this facility marks the end of an era but also the beginning of a new chapter for our city.

Looking to the future, the City of Blythe respectfully requests your assistance in actively exploring any/all alternatives to mitigate the economic void that will be left by the prison's closure. We are committed to ensuring the transition is as smooth as possible for everyone affected, most importantly our community. We are exploring various avenues, including attracting new businesses, enhancing local infrastructure, and increasing support for existing enterprises to bolster our local economy.

The City also plans to work closely with state officials and private partners to repurpose the prison facility in a manner that will benefit the community, considering options that could include transforming the site into a hub for renewable energy, a data center, or other community-oriented uses.

Although the City is working to offset economic losses, it still has not heard from the State regarding its strategy to mitigate the losses that will occur as a result of its decision to close Chuckawalla. The community as a whole will be impacted by the closure, and it already has. As the City's second-largest employer, Chuckawalla's closure will result in the loss of 850 jobs in

Blythe and a significant decrease in revenue for the City. Approximately 20% of our community is already below the poverty line, 50.1% of our 2,800 K-12 Palo Verde Unified School District (PVUSD) students are at an economic disadvantage and we're on track for the total number of students to drop below 2,500 for the first time in decades. These numbers will continue to worsen if assistance isn't provided.

The decline in enrollment, which has been a loss of 150 students since the closure was announced and an expected 250 by the October census, will result in the continued loss of teachers, and will result in even fewer jobs in the City. With the continued desire to make budget cuts, PVUSD stakeholders are concerned that more funds will be pulled and cause the need to layoff teachers. We need the State to provide minimum average daily attendance funding assistance in the same way as it did during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic for the next three to five years to allow the City and school district to protect its teachers and grow enrollment.

Along with assistance for the schools, we need the State to provide economic incentives for new and existing local businesses in Blythe. A thriving business community would help economic development and create a stronger economic base in the City by creating more job opportunities and increasing tax revenue that will be used to fund essential City services.

In the spirit of resilience and community, we look forward to transforming these challenges into opportunities. Blythe is a strong, tight-knit community, and we are poised to navigate this transition together, drawing on the same spirit of unity and support that was evident throughout the Save Chuck campaign.

I encourage you to learn about the many efforts our community made via our [Save Chuck](#) initiative, along with the various studies that demonstrate the impact of the closure along with suggestions for bolstering the economy. Again, I respectfully request your Administration's guidance to ensure our community is able to not only survive but ultimately thrive despite CVSP's closure. I look forward to your response and the opportunity to work together on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Mayor Joey DeConinck

Cc:

Senator Steve Padilla

Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia

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