

CALI CORRECTIONS TO LAYOFF THOUSANDS



The State of California prison and parole department is getting ready to lay off a staggering number of its employees in order to cut their costs and comply with a court order. Oddly enough the state officials are getting help from the unions that represent these employees. Unlike the situations in New York or the Miami-Dade area the unions, which include the California Correctional Peace Officers Association and five other unions for prison and correctional workers have all been helping. Each group has signed a contract amendment that allows the California state Department of Corrections to let go of historic job protections, reduce overtime and cut moving allowances. There are so many unions involved in these agreements because running a prison means more than hiring guards to keep them in their cells. The facilities need to be maintained, food needs to be prepared and records need to be kept. The various unions of the workers are involved in the negotiations. This should save the state of California roughly \$13 million this year. While no explicit promise about being able to save jobs was made to the unions that made the concessions each one signed off on the changes in hopes that less of their members would be out of a job when the corrections department makes its budget cuts. Those cuts are part of an ongoing process that began at the beginning of this month. The project is expected to continue on for several years. Of course, the unions had good reason to be worried about the security of their member's jobs, if no concessions were made by the workers. Currently, the prison and parole agency of the State of California employs about 63,000 people currently. The warning notices that were sent out, informing employees that they may be laid off at some point in the future, were give to more than 2,100 of those workers. While that may not be an impressive percentage it is also important to know that this would only be the first round of layoffs over the multi-year plan. While having to live with reduced benefits and less overtime is not ideal it is better than having no job. As some employees are going to have to relocate to other facilities in the state as part of the plan the loss of the relocation benefits are likely to hit some of them hard, but again it is better than being without a job in the current economic climate. While there is no way to ensure over the course of the changes to corrections system that jobs will not be lost. As a matter of fact, it is almost a certainty that some of the jobs will be lost during this process. The issue at stake is how many positions will be lost in the process. As part of the plan the department of corrections expects to lose 20,000 of the 144,000 inmates that are currently being held in the 33 prisons that the state of California maintains for adults.

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