

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2010/02/22/no-budget-freeze-for-incarceration-nation-obama-proposes-increased-prison-spending/>

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by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | February 22, 2010

In the nation with the [worlds highest incarceration rate](#), amid talk of dangerously high deficits and budget freezes, the White House proposes dramatically increasing spending on U.S. prisons.

A newly released [report from the Justice Policy Institute](#), titled The Obama Administrations 2011 Budget: More Policing, Prisons, and Punitive Policies, analyzes the priorities reflected in the president's overall spending plans for the Department of Justice in FY 2011 (which begins on October 1, 2010):

The President's proposed FY2011 Department of Justice (DOJ) budget asks for \$29.2 billion. This is on top of \$4 billion provided to DOJ through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), much of which will continue to fund activities through 2011 and beyond. Although the budget has some specific allocations for juvenile justice that it had removed last year, it still reduces spending on juvenile justice programs, while allocating hundreds of millions to hire or retain police officers and increasing federal prison spending.

This continued funding pattern will likely result in increased costs to states for incarceration that will outweigh the increased revenue for law enforcement, with marginal public safety benefits. While re-entry programs will help reduce recidivism, too little funding is targeted towards no-entry programs that keep people from ending up in the criminal justice system in the first place. As states struggle with tough economic times and burgeoning prison populations, research shows that the most cost-effective ways to increase public safety, reduce prison populations, and save money are to invest in community-based programs and policies that positively impact youth and more substance abuse treatment and mental health treatment services in the community.

In a [recent article in USA Today](#), Kevin Johnson breaks down the proposed increase in direct spending for the federal Bureau of Prisons (which is on top of the funds passed on to states and localities). As Johnson writes, the federal government is proposing to dramatically ramp up its detention operations:

The Obama administration's \$3.8 trillion 2011 budget proposal calls for a \$527.5 million infusion for the federal Bureau of Prisons and judicial security. The boost would bring the total Bureau of Prisons budget to \$6.8 billion. [The DOJ] projects that federal prisons, which now hold 213,000 offenders, will hold 7,000 more by 2011.

Also included in the Justice budget is a proposal to hire 652 additional prison guards and fill 1,200 vacant detention positions, far more than the combined 448 new agents planned for the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and U.S. Marshals Service.

Assistant Attorney General Lee Lofthus says the increased prison system funding does not reflect a de-emphasis of national security, only that the Bureau of Prisons needs the bed space.

Nearly half of the increase in BOP funds \$237 million would pay for bed space in solitary confinement cells at a new supermax prison in Thompson, Illinois. This is where the administration proposes to put the detainees transferred from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, when (and if) it closes.

Keep in mind that federal spending on prisons is dwarfed by state spending. While the BOP's budget is over 6 billion, the United States as a whole currently spends about \$68 billion a year on corrections, mostly at the state level. According to the [Drug War Chronicle](#), corrections spending, on average, ranks fourth in eating up state budget dollars, trailing only health care, education, and transportation. Figures from the [National Association of State Budget Officers](#) show that five states—Connecticut, Delaware, Michigan, Oregon and Vermont—spend more on prisons than they do on schools.

As Johnson points out in *USA Today*, the federal spending plan contrasts with the criminal justice strategies pursued in many cash-strapped states where officials have closed prisons or allowed for the early release of some non-violent offenders. He quotes Marc Mauer, executive director of the Sentencing Project, who says states have a greater sense of urgency to institute policy changes because they

have to balance budgets. That sense of urgency isn't there at the federal level, Mauer says. Prison expansion slows the momentum for the reconsideration of some of those policies.

How does the increased spending on prisons fit in to the three-year government spending freeze announced in the State of the Union address? The freeze won't be applied across-the-board to all programs, an article in [Government Executive](#) explains, citing Office of Management and Budget deputy director Rob Nabors. The freeze will affect the top line of the budget, but some programs that do not fall under exemptions for international affairs and for the Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs departments still will see increases.

The proposed budget would bring nonsecurity discretionary spending to its lowest share of the economy in more than 50 years, *Government Executive* reports. That means that in a time of economic suffering, the federal government will spend less of its overall funds on social programs (other than Social Security and Medicare) than it has since the 1950s. Yet funding for prisons and jails which already [hold more than one in 100 Americans](#) will increase. As the OMB's Nabors put it, Some programs will be down, some will be up, and they reflect the president's priorities and nation's priorities.

(You can take a look at the Department of Justice's own summary of its [proposed FY2011 budget](#).)

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, *Blood in the Face*. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets @solitarywatch.

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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Please look into Tehachapi, California state prison, the governor has cut the education out of the prison, he has laid off teachers and the inmates suffer for his budget cuts

wate got grate joke for you all. why dose it only say BOP in the inmate handbooks? If they said FBOP the inmates are going to think federal bop it litaly F BOP lol

I study the BOP there a load of BS! I mean my spelling may suck but not as much as they do at doing there jobs dose not everyone see how it all happens the government is all singing what do you do when the economes dieing build a prison as sad as that is at the rate we incarcerate we may as well put a fence round the usa and call it us the bop got hold of state jails standards a crap load of DOJ behind them there the tribunal running this hole thing there so many days i like to slap them up side the head and say think ESP solitary didn't work the first time you tried it what makes you think if you make it worse that it going get better like saying i got a drug that cures cancer but it really makes it worse and putting it on market after making it more killer then before the bop is like cancer there's no killing it one way or a nuther like roches there going out live us lol if it doesn't work first off don't keep doing it the same way dose anyone in the bop have the balls to stand for the right thing like stop thinking with you head up your ass lol solitary dose not work for good yes it modifies there behavior for the wores learn from your mistakes learn dam you bop learn lol i not got my ged and i can do better running it then all them it hurts to watch them f it up take out those who don't need to be in adx anymore and holey hell you got room oh ya and you won't save cash stop throwing so many in the hole for shit that's not valid i would be the death of the bop if they ever had me to look after cos i can't be broken and i law smart i vary smart truly just not a spelling grammar and math but law i kick ass at it

It seems to me that the BOP Mission statement to provide humane and cost-efficient facilities has fallen astray. The widening use of Solitary Confinement fails to do either not to mention the other Strategic goal mentioned of providing services and programs to facilitate inmates successful reintegration into society, consistent with community expectations and standards. Their true intent is reflected in the meager 42 new positions to accomplish this task compared to the much larger budget for additional correctional officers.

Let's face it this is a very big business a business that employs tens of thousands of people and therefore they have collectively chose

what Professor Robert Merton an American Nobel laureate in economics has called Goal Displacement or their continued existence over the BOPs founding mission. It is better for their bottom line to have a steady stream of 99 and 9/10s % poor people fill their beds and keep coming back like they are enrolled in some kind of perverse frequent visitor program. What would happen if both preventative programs and true rehabilitation programs were successful? Do you truly believe the Correctional Officers Unions and BOP executives want those underfunded areas to succeed?
NOT!!

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