

ACO RESPONDS: PRIVATIZATION NOT THE SOLUTION TO COST SAVINGS!

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in response to comments made by Monmouth County attorney Robert J. Hrebek in the article "Overtime at jail difficult to trim" on February 8, 2009. Mr. Hrebek is commented in saying, "that if the union and the sheriff can not agree on a more efficient system, then the freeholders should consider out-sourcing jail security to a private firm."

If cost savings, liability and public safety is the County's goal, than privatization is NOT the solution.

Cost Savings –

"...it maybe concluded that there are no data to support the contention that privately operated facilities offer cost savings over publicly managed facilities....it was discovered that, rather than the projected 20-percent cost savings," touted by the industry itself, "...the average savings for privatization was only about 1%, and most of that was achieved through lower labor costs," US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance: "Emerging Issues on Privatized Prisons," James Austin, Ph.D., Gary Coventry, Ph.D., February 2001.

In addition, studies by the Government Accounting Office, the Council of State Governments and The Abt report, commissioned by the US Attorney General's Office, all point to very little or no cost savings.

Liability –

Another myth promoted by the industry is that they indemnify the jurisdiction in which they operate. The government is the only entity in the United States with the power to incarcerate. Case after cases has shown that although the government may hire whomever they want to administer their prisons, they cannot abdicate their responsibilities for the conditions of that confinement.

Public Safety –

The Federal Bureau of Prisons is one of the private prison industries largest clients. After years of contracting with these corporations here is what their spokesperson had to say:

"Over the years, the private sector has had significant problems with the incarceration and management of medium security and high security offenders. In particular, the private sector has not demonstrated the ability to manage high security sentenced inmates for long term confinement..." Thomas Kane, Assistant Director for Information, Policy and Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, 6/20/02.

Lastly, have we already forgotten the riot at the Esmor facility in Elizabeth New Jersey?

In 1995, an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) detention center for illegal aliens under contract with Esmor Correctional Services (since renamed Correctional Services Corporation) endured a riot involving hundreds of prisoners. Several illegal immigrants were

injured in the melee when the detainees, shouting accusations of mistreatment, took over a building, demolished its interior causing millions in damages, and holding two guards hostage for five hours before police broke through their barricades.

The INS conducted an investigation and concluded that officials of Esmor failed to exercise control over guards, who were improperly trained or had not been fully investigated before being hired. The INS report stated that "poorly trained and abusive guards preyed on immigrants," while their lack of training was evident when the riot began as guards adopted an "every person for himself mentality." As a result of the episode, the INS ended its contract with the private company.

Mr. Hrebek like the saying goes "you should be careful what you wish for".

Sincerely,
Henry J. Ruiz
Communications Director
American Correctional Officer



Henry Ruiz is an active New Jersey County Correctional Supervisor with more than 20 years in Corrections.