

# FASTFACTS

House Appropriations Committee (D)



**JOE MARKOSEK**, DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN January 26, 2017

## 2017 Prison Closures

The Department of Corrections is planning to close two of its 26 state prisons on June 30, 2017, and reduce the capacity of its halfway houses by 50 percent.

SCI Cresson and SCI Greensburg were the last state prisons to be closed. Since then, DOC's prison population has fallen by 2,000 inmates.

The new round of prison closures follows consistently declining inmate populations since 2012 and political pressure to find savings in the corrections' budget. At \$2.4 billion, DOC's budget is 7.6 percent of General Fund expenditures for 2016/17.

The Wolf administration is estimating 2017/18 savings from the prison closures at \$89 million to \$163 million. Approximately 2,700 inmates would be transferred to other SCIs.<sup>1</sup>

Corrections will announce which prisons will be closed on Thursday, Jan. 26. More precise projections of savings and the impact on personnel and inmates will be available after that date.

### Prison Closures

Corrections will choose two of the five SCIs listed below for closure. These five SCIs were selected based on DOC's analysis of prison facility age and condition, and potential cost savings. Other factors that cannot be monetized but are being considered by DOC include workplace culture, location, and accessibility.

	Annual Savings	County (region)	Employees	Pct. In county	
SCI Frackville	\$ 44,000,000	Schyulkill (E)	384	54%	<i>SCI Retreat is 12 miles away from SCI Dallas, a 19 minute drive. Both prisons are in Luzerne County.</i>
SCI Retreat	\$ 45,000,000	Luzerne (NE)	371	79%	
SCI Mercer	\$ 46,000,000	Mercer (NW)	376	55%	
SCI Pittsburgh	\$ 81,000,000	Allegheny (SW)	516	57%	
SCI Waymart	\$ 82,000,000	Wayne (NE)	663	25%	

To make sure no current employees will be laid off, DOC has instituted a hiring freeze across 14 facilities, including the five candidates for closure. However, the hiring freeze and relocation of current employees reduces potential savings because existing employees will retain their current benefits, which are greater than what a new hire would receive.

DOC is seeking an arrangement with the federal government to house federal inmates in Pennsylvania. This would be new revenue for DOC. Federal inmates would be housed in open SCI beds left over after the closures. Or, if an agreement is finalized before the prisons are closed, those inmates could be housed in one or both of the prisons slated for closure allowing them to remain open.

<sup>1</sup>Median value of the inmate population as any two SCI closures given all possible combinations.

**What factors are included in the estimated \$89M-\$163M annual savings for closing two prisons?<sup>2</sup>**

**Job transfers:** The cost of keeping all current personnel within the DOC system without layoffs, including maintaining current benefits for each employee, was subtracted to estimate net savings.

**Mothballing:** The annual cost to maintain the facility after it is closed was subtracted to estimate net savings.

**Moving inmates to other facilities:** The added daily cost for inmates who will need to be transferred to other SCIs was subtracted to estimate net savings.

**Adding specialized housing unit capacity at other facilities:** The cost to add mental health beds, treatment units, restricted housing, and other specialized housing was included in DOC analysis of the five facilities and was subtracted to estimate net savings.

## Inmate Population

The impact of closing any two of the five prisons will be to transfer up to 3,200 displaced inmates to other SCIs and to reduce the total capacity of state prisons by up to 3,700. After the closures and transfers are completed, DOC will have between 2,900 and 4,000 open beds.

*During the first six months of 2016/17, SCI population dropped by more than 100 inmates per month. If this continues until the end of the fiscal year, **600 more beds** would be added to the number of open beds after prison closures and the transfer of current inmates in each scenario.*

<b>SCI Retreat</b>	Move 1,100 inmates, reduce total bed capacity by 1,200, and leave <b>5,200 open beds.</b>
<b>SCI Frackville</b>	Move 1,200 inmates, reduce total bed capacity by 1,300, and leave <b>5,200 open beds.</b>
<b>SCI Mercer</b>	Move 1,400 inmates, reduce total bed capacity by 1,500, and leave <b>4,900 open beds.</b>
<b>SCI Waymart</b>	Move 1,400 inmates, reduce total bed capacity by 1,600, and leave <b>5,000 open beds.</b>
<b>SCI Pittsburgh</b>	Move 1,900 inmates, reduce total bed capacity by 2,100, and leave <b>4,400 open beds.</b>
<b>Smallest 2</b>	Move 2,300 inmates, reduce total bed capacity by 2,500, and leave <b>4,000 open beds.</b>
<b>Biggest 2</b>	Move 3,200 inmates, reduce total bed capacity by 3,700, and leave <b>2,900 open beds.</b>

## Halfway Houses

DOC will also reduce the capacity of halfway houses by 50 percent. Halfway houses, also known as community corrections centers and community contract facilities, house inmates who are close to being released. The goal of the program is to provide a gradual transition back to the community. However, a recent analysis by DOC and Council of State Governments showed that inmates paroled directly to the community have better outcomes than those who spend time in halfway houses. In response to this, DOC is reducing its investment in these facilities to save money and improve outcomes. Inmate population in community corrections centers and community contract facilities is 1,017 as of Dec. 31, 2016.

<sup>2</sup>Table 2 updated with new information provided by DOC on Jan. 26, 2017.

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