Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB) is a coalition of over 70 member organizations working to curb prison and jail spending by reducing the number of prisons and jails in the state and the number of people incarcerated, and to investing resources in health and human services, education, affordable housing, and alternatives to incarceration.

Budget Update:
Governor Brown’s proposed budget brings spending on corrections total budget to $12.656 billion. General Fund spending on prisons is up 0.5% from $9.995 billion to $10.078 billion, and Special Funds include $2.578 billion for corrections. Overall budget spending is up 0.8%. Spending on prisons slightly decreased and there are significant drops in the prison population.

Good: Prison Population is Reducing
- Revised Contract Bed Plan
  - Reduction of $20 million in this year’s budget that was meant to increase contract bed capacity
- Prison population is reducing faster than anticipated. Over 9,500 people were impacted and released by the expansion of good time credit for 2nd strikers specifically those serving time for non-violent/non-sexual, Prop. 47, expansion of medical parole, implementation of elder parole, new non-violent second striker parole, and SB 260.

Bad: More Foot Dragging
- 3,682 New Prison Beds at existing prisons at RJ Donovan in San Diego and Mule Creek in Ione - $35.5 million from the General Fund and $90,000 from the Inmate Welfare Fund
- Administration will wait until next 2016-17 budget to develop a long term plan to get out of the court order:
  - Use of contract beds (Projected reduction of $73.3 million in CDCR budget due to a reduction of 4,000 out-of-state contract beds by June 2016)
  - Permanent solution to CRC Norco
  - Additional population reduction strategies

Legislative Update:
Elder Parole (SB 224-Liu): This bill would codify (turn into law) CDCR’s current elder parole policy, which established a parole process for people aged 60 and older who have served 25 years consecutive or more in prison.
- Status: This bill was turned into a two-year bill. If the author decides to bring it back, the bill would be heard again next year, and would require a 2/3 vote.
- Why a 2/3 vote: Two days before the deadline to get the bill out of the Senate, we found out that Leg. Counsel had keyed the bill for a 2/3rds vote due to a conflict with Prop. 184 (the original Three Strikes Law). Since this was a voter-passed initiative, any change to the law would have to be approved by 2/3 of the Legislature, rather than by a simple majority. Since the current elder parole program is the result of a federal court order, it can bypass this (terrible) Three Strikes
conflict, and people who are currently serving Three Strikes terms that have a mandatory minimum term of more than 25 years are eligible for this program after serving 25 years. We did not want to write an amendment that would codify a less inclusive elder parole program than the one that is currently in place, and since we didn't have a sure 2/3rds vote, we (along with the author) decided to pull the bill. The current court-ordered program is still in place, so people eligible under the criteria should still be scheduled for and receive their parole hearings.

The Alternative Custody Program (SB 219-Liu): This bill expands ACP to include those with medical or mental health holds and establishes a timeline for application processing. The timeline includes a response within two weeks of a person’s application with notification of eligibility. The individualized treatment and rehabilitation plan must be developed no later than 30 days after a person is found potentially eligible for the program. The incarcerated person shall be released to the program no later than seven business days following the notice of acceptance (unless there are issues with a placement). If denied, the person may appeal the decision through normal grievance procedures or reapply for participation in the program 30 days after the notice of the denial.

- Status: The bill was signed by the Governor on October 11th.

Earned Time Credits (AB 512-Stone): This bill would expand milestone credit earnings from six weeks to 18 weeks retroactively and expands to include more of the population (mostly people with lower level convictions).

- Status: This bill has been turned into a two-year bill. CDCR wanted to register support but only if it was turned into a two-year bill. If the author decides to bring it back the bill would be heard again next year.

Solitary Confinement Credit Earning Opportunity (SB 759-Anderson): This bill would require CDCR, beginning July 1, 2016, to collect specific data regarding prisoners held in Solitary Housing Units. This bill also requires the department to establish regulations to allow specified prisoners to earn credits during the time he or she is in the specified units.

- Status: In the Senate Appropriations Committee they decided that the data collection was very expensive, so they removed the data collection from the bill without the consent of the authors. This bill turned into a two-year bill because the author wanted to add in the data collection. If the author decides to bring it back, the bill would be heard again next year.

Youth Sentencing Bill (SB 261-Hancock): This bill would require the Board of Parole to conduct youth parole hearings for individuals who committed specified crimes when they were 23 or younger (usually lengthy or life sentences). The bill does not apply to people convicted under the Three Strikes law.

- Status: The bill was signed by the Governor on October 3rd.

Next Steps: 1) Mail this inside to someone that you know who might be impacted by these policies. 2) Keep following us. In the next few months we will be pushing to move some of these bills forward in the broadest way possible. Things change often in the legislative process, and we will need your help to work towards bringing as many people home as possible!

Date Updated: November 11, 2015