

Balancing Our Priorities: Can We Safely Spend Less on Corrections?

October 8, 2009

The Inn at St. John's
44045 Five Mile Road
Plymouth, MI

Faced with an ever-deepening fiscal crisis, Michigan is searching for ways to reduce the \$1.9 billion budget of the Department of Corrections. The decision of the Granholm administration to parole more people who have served their minimum terms has been criticized by some as a threat to public safety. Corrections employees and communities where prisons are located oppose facility closings. Legislators are sharply divided between those who want to reduce the prison population and those who want to privatize prison services. Community-based programs proven to reduce crime are starved for funds.

Last year, the Prisons & Corrections Section and four other organizations sponsored a well-received, half-day symposium in Lansing that addressed these questions. The Section is now presenting an updated and expanded version at a location convenient for those in Southeast Michigan, the beautiful Inn at St. John's. The symposium, which will run from 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., is open to any member of the criminal justice community and should be of interest to defense attorneys, prosecutors, judges, probation and parole staff, treatment personnel, community service providers and members of law enforcement.

The morning portion of the program will focus on population reduction strategies, including those currently being employed, additional alternatives, risk assessment and rehabilitation, and the prosecutor's perspective. The afternoon portion will address investing in prevention. Speakers will discuss the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative, mental health and substance abuse treatment, community corrections and creative jail programs, and removing barriers to reentry. A wide variety of viewpoints will be represented and ample time will be reserved for questions.

The Prisons and Corrections Section analyzes issues affecting prisons, jails and community-based corrections and engages in public education. It is also designed to be a forum for the cross-professional exchange of ideas, so membership is open to non-attorney criminal justice professionals.

The conference program and registration form are attached. We hope you will join us!