



Washington State Legislature

January 21, 2010

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Gregoire,

It has come to our attention that the Department of Corrections has stepped up its timeline for the closure of the first unit of Larch Corrections Center to March 1, 2010. We are extremely concerned about this turn of events for several reasons.

Recently, we met with representatives from Office of Financial Management and the Department of Corrections. A lot of questions were asked that presently remain unanswered. The fiscal impacts to Department of Social and Health Services were thoroughly studied regarding the full closure of McNeil Island; however the fiscal impacts to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and State Parks do not appear to have been studied at all regarding full or partial closure of Larch. Also, the capital costs of a complete shutdown of Larch have not been studied.

At this meeting, it was indicated that the regional economy was given high consideration in deciding which facilities to close with the feeling that the loss of jobs in Clark County would be felt less than in other communities in the state. However, Clark County currently has a 14.3% unemployment rate. The loss of 114 jobs would definitely be felt in the county and region with the highest unemployment rate in the state.

We would like to reiterate the benefits and cost savings that these agencies receive as a result of utilizing the inmates at Larch as stated in our previous letter to you. We have requested that a thorough study be made of the impact to DNR and State Parks and would appreciate answers to these questions *before* further moves to implement the closure are made.

As news of the closure is circulating there has been a sharp increase in community outcry. We feel that because the consultants never visited Larch, nor spoke with the staff at Larch, the real impacts to our communities and our constituents remain unknown and, therefore, have not been considered by you as you move forward with your efforts to close Larch.

We cannot help but suspect that the motivation for this push to implement the closure plan is to render useless our efforts to keep Larch open and that if the majority of inmates are moved and a

large number of staff are transferred to other institutions it would be too costly to undo these changes.

We strongly urge you to reverse your decision to speed up the closure of the first unit of Larch Corrections Center until your budget office has actually considered the additional costs to DNR and State Parks of closing Larch as well as the capital costs associated with a complete shutdown of Larch.

We continue to request that Larch Corrections Center be removed from consideration for closure until the full impacts have been properly studied. At the very least, we feel you should abandon full closure and follow the consultant's recommendation for partial closure. Doing so would keep the institution intact and better enable us to recover those beds in 3-5 years, when we will need those beds once again.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Rep. Ed Orcutt
18th District



Rep. Jaime Herrera
18th District



Sen. Joseph Zarelli
18th District



Rep. Deb Wallace
17th District



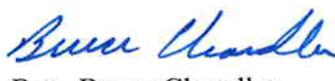
Rep. Tim Probst
17th District



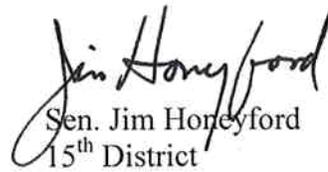
Sen. Don Benton
17th District



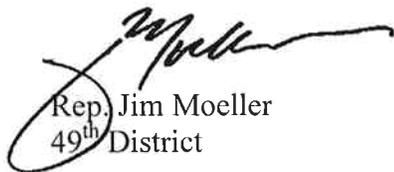
Rep. David Taylor
15th District



Rep. Bruce Chandler
15th District



Sen. Jim Honeyford
15th District



Rep. Jim Moeller
49th District



Rep. Jim Jacks
49th District



Sen. Craig Pridemore
49th District

cc: Representative Kelli Linville, Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
Senator Margarita Prentice, Chair, Senate Ways and Means Committee