



MISSISSIPPI
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MDOC DISCUSSES ALTERNATIVES WITH COUNTIES TO KEEP FREE INMATE LABOR

JACKSON – The Mississippi Department of Corrections is discussing alternatives with counties to keep free inmate labor when the Joint State County Work Programs begins phasing out on Aug. 1.

“MDOC is trying to find a way to work with these sheriffs and counties that will be affected by the closure of the JSCWP,” Corrections Commissioner Marshall Fisher said. “At this time, MDOC continues to move forward with its original closure plan. We have to get out of the mindset that we must continue doing business the old way.”

The first proposed alternative is for participating counties to keep state inmates without compensation from the state. Secondly, the counties can request mobile work crews at the state’s expense, based on current state law.

A 2003 state attorney general’s opinion states that when space is available at state correctional institutions, MDOC is not required to bear the costs associated with housing state inmates in county jails. MDOC now has plenty of space at the community work centers (CWCs) and the state prisons. Therefore, MDOC no longer will reimburse counties \$20 per day per offender for housing and feeding inmates, Fisher said.

The plan is to move the fewer than 1,000 inmates participating in the 30 Joint State County Work Programs to the state’s 16 work centers. Counties with both a JSCWP and a CWC will be the first to see the program end.

“Laying off my people or closing one of the state’s prisons as was suggested during the meeting with sheriffs is not a viable option,” Fisher said. “With the continued reduction of inmates in state prisons, we anticipate more significant changes in the future.”

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