



Overview of 2026-27 Proposed Corrections Budget

Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB) is a statewide coalition of more than 100 organizations working to reduce the number of people imprisoned and the number of prisons and jails in the state. We advocate for divestment from corrections and an investment in justice that centers care, not punishment.

The [2026-27 Proposed budget for Corrections](#) totals **\$18.86 billion**, an increase of more than \$618 million compared to last year's Enacted Budget. Most of the Corrections budget comes from State Funds totalling \$18.09 billion. **The budget allocates \$14.21 billion to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)**, as well as **\$2.12 billion** to local community corrections, and **\$934 million** to “enhancing law enforcement growth and activities.”

California is dealing with a budget shortfall estimated at anywhere from **\$2.9 to \$18 billion**. The state continues to confront structural operating deficits. While the proposed budget is balanced for 2026-27, the state projects a deficit of roughly **\$22 billion** in the 2027-28 fiscal year. In the face of these challenges and ongoing threats from the federal government, **the Proposed Budget increases spending on incarceration despite continual declines in the prison population.**

The Proposed Budget continues to tout old news on prison closures, such as the termination of the final contract to incarcerate people out-of-state, which happened nearly 7 years ago. Prior prison closures and contract terminations have saved vast sums, an **estimated nearly \$5 billion by 2027-28.**

It costs nearly [\\$128,000 a year](#) to incarcerate an average person in California prisons. However, more than **19,000** people in state prisons are **55 or older**. In 2024, incarcerated people **60+** were **14%** of CDCR's adult-institution population but accounted for an estimated **27%** of **health system expenses**. The **largest healthcare cost category** among patients **70+** was **specialized healthcare beds**. California Correction Health Care Services 2024 [estimates](#) show average annual **health-system costs per person** rise steeply with age—about **\$87,552 (60–69)**; **\$139,056 (70–79)**; and

\$237,325 (80+)—making **expanded release pathways for elders and medically vulnerable people** currently receiving [inadequate](#) and fragmented medical care a **humane, direct cost-reduction strategy**.

California must not stall additional prison closures. There are [nearly 14,000 empty beds](#) in state prisons. Given the substantial cuts included in the federal tax and spending bill, the state should be focused on shoring up essential services, and help pay for this by closing more prisons.

In 2023, the **Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO)** concluded California could safely deactivate **five additional prisons** by 2028, saving **nearly \$1 billion annually** in ongoing operating costs, plus **an additional \$1.3 billion** in infrastructure and capital savings. The campaign to [Close California Prisons](#) calls for going further—**at least six more as of 2026**—to protect vital programs and realign spending with community needs.

The path forward is clear: close prisons, reinvest in communities, and stop wasting public dollars on empty beds and outdated institutions. California needs a [roadmap](#) for prison closure that meets this moment with urgency, equity, and care.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS: According to the [Three Judge Court Quarterly Update](#), CDCR facilities are operating at “122%” of their design capacity. CDCR has manipulated its capacity calculation to now include space for programming, healthcare, and services—not just beds—resulting in **inflated overcrowding figures** even as the population declines.

Fall projections estimate the average daily adult incarcerated population at 89,162 in FY 2025–26 (**2.2% below spring projections**) and 87,613 in FY 2026–27 (**5.5% below spring projections**). Even accounting for Proposition 36, the Governor's own forecast shows no sustained increase, and a continued decline to 84,664 by June 30, 2030. California can safely close additional prisons without overcrowding the remaining facilities.

The average daily parole population is also projected to continue **declining from 33,816 in 2025–26 to 30,785 through June 30, 2030**.

THE GOOD: The Proposed Budget maintains some positives that advocates and community members fought for and that were announced in last year's budget:

- **Maintaining Plan to Close 4th Prison by October:** Last year, in direct response to sustained advocacy by communities and impacted people, the Governor announced plans to close the California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) by October 2026, with projected annual savings of \$150 million. Our communities

must continue to monitor the closure process and ensure the prison is fully decommissioned. CURB [has also called](#) for investing savings from closure into economic development initiatives and social services in communities most in need and pursuing community-informed repurposing opportunities for the site.

- **Maintaining Funding for Community-Based Re-entry Organizations:** The budget maintains grants and funding for community-based organizations that assist formerly incarcerated individuals transitioning into the community. The Proposed Budget includes \$23.3 million from the General Fund and \$10.7 million in ongoing reimbursements for these organizations.

THE BAD: CDCR's infrastructure includes more than 40 million square feet of state-owned building space on more than 20,000 acres of land statewide. This year's budget includes new money for county youth detention centers, even more CDCR staff, "re-entry" programs operated by CDCR rather than community-based groups, and more.

- **6,000 More Positions than Two Years Ago.** Despite the closure of 4 prisons and the prison population continuing to decline, CDCR has added nearly 6,000 positions since 2024-25. In 2026-27, CDCR is budgeted for [58,053 positions](#). That is 2 employees for every 3 people incarcerated. The number of people working in various areas of CDCR administration has grown by between 9% and 27% in just two years. For instance, **overall administration has grown by nearly 9%** from 2024-25 to 2026-27 (an increase of 212 positions), while "Institution Administration" has grown by 14% (327 more positions), and Parole Operations Administration has grown by 27% (68 more positions). By far, the largest category of CDCR employees is "General Security," with over 23,000 positions.
- **\$62 Million for County Youth Detention Centers and Other Capital Projects:** The [2007 Senate Bill 81](#) created a financing program for designing, renovating, and constructing county juvenile facilities. This year's Proposed Budget includes \$35 million in design build funding for a juvenile facility in Alameda County and \$17.5 million in construction funding for a juvenile facility in Riverside County.
- **Re-entry Programs Operated by CDCR Rather than Community Groups:** The Proposed Budget devotes **over 6 times more funding to post-release programs operated by CDCR than to community-based orgs** assisting formerly incarcerated individuals with reentry. The budget includes **\$148.4 million General Fund and \$44.2 million in reimbursement funding** for post-release community reentry programs operated by CDCR. Additionally, the Administration has funded two new pre-release community corrections reentry centers operated by CDCR and plans to activate six more by 2028. CURB maintains pre-release reentry and traditional reentry programs should not be entrusted to CDCR but to community based systems that are rooted in care.

- **San Quentin Rehabilitation Center (SQRC) Funding Maintained:** The administration maintained its funding commitment to the San Quentin California Model project. The Proposed Budget includes \$78.5 million General Fund over the next five years for several infrastructure projects related to fire and safety upgrades at San Quentin. While CURB supports SQ programs led and created by currently incarcerated people and many community-based organizations, the goals of this project remain vague and lack success metrics.
- **No Plan to End Costly “Warm Shutdowns”:** The three state prisons deactivated in recent years (Deuel Vocational Institution, California Correctional Center, and Chuckawalla Valley State Prison) remain staffed and maintained despite being empty. **This has cost the state an estimated \$300 million since their closure announcements.** While the passage of AB 137, a budget bill that instructs CDCR to report any excess properties to Department of General Services (DGS) to move forward with the process of repurposing those spaces, protects these properties from ICE takeover, it does not cover closed private facilities, and the Budget offers no other plan to fully decommission these sites. For example, California City Correctional Facility (CAC), formerly operated by CDCR was closed in 2024 and almost immediately repurposed into California City Detention Center, now operated by U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), currently detaining nearly 1,400 people and counting. Permanent closure coupled with clear prohibition on repurposing facilities for any carceral use is essential to prevent fiscal waste and resist the expansion of aggressively expanding carceral systems.

THE UGLY: The Budget continues to prioritize other carceral spending while our state's most vulnerable residents suffer. Oftentimes, initiatives look positive but obscure irresponsible spending.

- **Overtime for Fire Watch:** The budget proposes \$15.2 million in one-time General Fund spending on overtime for staff to patrol for fires, as mandated by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. **Overtime for manual fire patrols is not a long-term solution.** A recent OIG report shows that the overwhelming majority of state prisons are located in climate hazard zones. Further, [CDCR is unprepared to evacuate incarcerated individuals in the case of a climate emergency.](#)
- **Lump Sum Payments:** Last year's budget promised hundreds of millions in operational savings due to administrative changes that included eliminating nearly 1,200 vacant permanent positions. **CDCR's consistent lack of transparency makes it unclear how much of these savings really materialized.** Now, the Proposed Budget requests **\$90 million ongoing from the General Fund** to pay out accrued leave balances to CDCR employees who retire from or leave CDCR. Historically, CDCR paid these costs by reallocating funding held for vacant positions but these costs should be built into the actual amount

allocated for each position. Failing to accurately account for the cost of leave obscures the true costs of each CDCR employee and leaves California residents footing the bill.

With continued revenue concerns exacerbated by hostile federal policy shifts, California faces serious threats to its ability to fund core programs. In this context, eliminating unnecessary spending—starting with the prison system—is more urgent than ever. California can lead in this political moment, demonstrating that fiscal responsibility and true public safety are rooted in care, equity, and structural change.

For a full summary of the State Budget visit <https://ebudget.ca.gov>.

For more information on CURB's work and advocacy, read [The Prison Closure Roadmap](#), visit www.curbprisonspending.org, or email info@curbprisonspending.org.

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