



KING COUNTY CORRECTIONS GUILD

February 1, 2011
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Doug Justus,
206-755-6194

Attacks On Corrections Officers By High Risk Inmates Illustrates Danger Posed By Staff Reductions

In King County Overall Jail Population is Down, But The Number of High Risk Inmates is Up

The murder of a state Corrections Officer in Monroe illustrates the same danger demonstrated by the recent brutal attack by an inmate on a King County Corrections Officer in the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent. (MRJC): budget cuts and inadequate staffing put officers and the public in danger.

“Our hearts go out to the family of the officer in Monroe, and to our officer and his family,” said Sgt. Doug Justus, President of the King County Corrections Guild. “By all accounts, it appears these two incidents were tragically similar.”

In both cases, Corrections Officers were working alone at a post that the Officers believed required more than one officer.

In the King County incident, the inmate involved had a violent history, and a history of being housed in the maximum security and psychiatric areas of the downtown Seattle jail. **Due to the very high number of high risk inmates currently in our jails, however, the inmate was housed in a section of the MRJC that was not designed or staffed for this type of inmate.**

“This is the reality in our jails today,” said Justus. “Our overall population is down, but the number of dangerous inmates is up. This inmate was placed in a facility without adequate staffing and one of our officers paid the price. It sounds like something very similar happened in Monroe.”

The 2011 Budget, prepared by Executive Dow Constantine, acknowledged the current situation in our jails:

As Average Daily Population has dropped unexpectedly since 2007, so too has the make-up of the population shifted. The number of offenders classified as minimum security has declined and those at the highest level have increased. Likewise, the number of inmates in special housing and psychiatric housing has increased

Maximum security and psychiatric inmates require more supervision and monitoring, and we are concerned that **at current staffing levels we are not able to properly monitor these inmates now, as this assault makes clear**

Psychiatric inmates are a particular problem. **We are currently well over capacity in regards to inmates with psychiatric problems.** (118% of capacity regarding psychiatric inmates when the budget was transmitted to the Council in September 2010) These inmates are no longer housed on just the one floor designed for them in the downtown Seattle jail, making monitoring much more difficult.

During last Fall's budget deliberation, some members of the Council raised the idea of cutting jail staff based on an audit report and lower than expected overall population. The Executive joined the Guild in opposing this proposal due to the elevated level of high risk inmates. **This incident confirms that the recent audit fails to account for the increased number of high risk inmates, and that staff cuts would be dangerous and irresponsible.**

"Our job is dangerous enough," said Justus. "Asking us to supervise dangerous inmates without enough staff in areas of the jail that weren't designed to house high risk inmates is unacceptable."