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Mike Williams, President

Florida AFL-CIO

Press Release

Breaking: Florida's Sheriffs Denounce Privatization Deal

With the final vote on SB 2038 only a day away, Sheriffs are making their voices heard in objection to this corporate give-away.

Letters from Sheriffs condemning the Senate's rush to pass SB 2038, the prison privatization bill, are attached to this e-mailed release. These letters were sent to Senate President Haridopolos' office and are being distributed to Senators at the Capitol.

These Sheriffs join law enforcement from across the state in saying "no" to privatizing Florida's prison system and are encouraging the Senate to defeat SB 2038.

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For Release February 13th, 2012



Sheriff
KEN J. MASCARA

Telephone: (772) 462-3200 • Fax: (772) 489-5851
4700 West Midway Road • Fort Pierce, Florida 34981



February 10, 2012

Senate President Mike Haridopolos
409 The Capitol
The President's Office
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Via email: haridopolos.mike.web@flsenate.gov

Dear Senator Haridopolos:

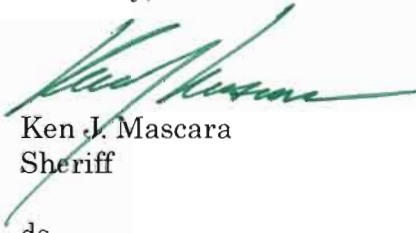
I am writing to express my sincere concern and displeasure over the Department of Corrections prison privatization proposal currently pending before the Florida Senate. Ignoring the fact that the issue appears to have sailed through the process without being adequately vetted, I have grave public safety concerns over privatization. Privatization can only save the taxpayers money through cutting the largest cost factor in DOC's budget – personnel. In the continued race to the bottom, private prison contractors reduce pay, benefits and quality of personnel in the interest of slashing budgets; but as in most other areas of life, you get what you pay for. I know that when protecting our families from the most heinous individuals in our society, I don't want the guard who will work for the least pay – I want a professional who receives proper training, a reasonable wage and benefits, and the security of knowing that the people of Florida, and its elected leaders, appreciate and value the often thankless job they do.

Interestingly, as I am sure you are well aware, promised savings from privatization never materialize. Costs are either slashed up front but back-loaded in contracts, or costly inmates (e.g., those requiring on-going medical care) are shipped out to DOC run facilities so as to make the private prison's balance sheet appear more favorable.

Further, I have witnessed numerous instances where factions have proposed privatization of county jail operations. As the Legislature has shown little restraint in its willingness to dictate the operations of and infringe upon the sovereignty of local government, I believe prison privatization is one more step down a slippery slope that has the potential to further whittle away at the power and independence of the Office of Sheriff.

I am happy to discuss this matter with you in greater depth should you so desire. Please contact me on my mobile phone anytime at 772/201-4372.

Sincerely,



Ken J. Mascara
Sheriff

ds

Broward Sheriff's Office
2601 West Broward Boulevard
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
954.831.8900 • www.sheriff.org



Pride in Service with Integrity

February 10, 2012

The Honorable Mike Haridopolos
President, Florida Senate
409 The Capitol
The President's Office
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear Senator Haridopolos:

As Sheriff of the largest multi accredited, full service public safety agency in the nation, I have grave concerns about prison privatization in the state of Florida. My concerns are on many levels but the most important concerns are in the very essence of public safety.

The Broward Sheriff's Office operates the 13th largest jail system in the United States and our operations are considered as a model by detention systems throughout the nation. In fact our own Lt. Colonel Kim Spadaro, second in command of the Broward County Sheriff's Office Department of Detention, will be sworn in as president of the American Jail Association in April, considered by her peers for this prestigious honor. Lt. Colonel Spadaro's new status is a shining example of the experience BSO has in this field.

Leading an enormous public safety agency that serves nearly 1.8 million residents of Broward County, I am fully cognizant of my fiscal responsibilities to the taxpayers. I have had to make many tough decisions making deep budget cuts in these times of financial crisis but I have never once, by any of those decisions or reductions, sacrificed the safety of our residents. It is my belief that prison privatization will do exactly that, sacrifice public safety.

I am comfortable that you agree that the primary responsibility of government is the safety of its citizens. There are serious considerations with private, for profit companies managing jail systems, some of which are law enforcement experience, certifications, and law enforcement authority during times of crisis. Privatization will add a burden on law enforcement that could put the public at risk.

The Honorable Mike Haridopolos
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Consider that private prison guards are not FDLE certified, not American Correctional Association accredited and do not get the level of rigorous training or standards that sworn and fully certified correctional officers receive. In the case of BSO, all our sworn personnel train together creating a seamless operation between corrections and law enforcement personnel that respond together to crisis situations. Private guards are not authorized to respond. Private prison guards are not protected by sovereign immunity when in the community and therefore, are not helpful in prison escapes. We use the same equipment and secure communications systems. Private companies will not have that advantage, increasing critical response time.

Three counties in Florida have tried jail privatization and it was not successful. Those Sheriffs had to take back control of their jails. Sheriffs around the nation have also tried and suffered the same consequences.

Government should not abrogate nor abdicate its responsibility for the care, custody, and control of prison inmates to a private company. Rushing into a privatization plan is risky and dangerous. The rewards inherent in jail privatization in no way exceed the risks. It is the responsibility of the state to keep our citizens safe.

We are putting public safety at risk by rushing into a plan, without knowing the real consequences of such a major shift in privatizing Florida's correctional officers who are valued members of Florida's law enforcement community. I trust you will give this critical plan serious reconsideration.

Sincerely,



Al Lamberti
Sheriff of Broward County