



Expert opinions on Los Angeles County Jail Expansion

What is questionable...is whether Baca should be given new or refurbished jails when he's so clearly struggling to run the ones he has...Moreover, the sheriff has some 4,000 available beds across the county jail system, but they go unused because the department can't afford to hire additional deputies to guard the inmates that would fill them. At Twin Towers Jail, which the county spent \$373 million to build, 1,000 beds are unoccupied...The Sheriff's Department should demonstrate that it can properly operate the jails already under its control before it asks taxpayers to spend another \$1.4 billion. *Editorial, LA Times "LA County should be careful on jails" November 23, 2011*

"Given the mounting evidence that for years a violent clique of rogue sheriff's deputies has been savaging the inmates in Men's Central and other Los Angeles County jails, The Times is perfectly correct in calling on Sheriff Lee Baca to show that he can properly run the jails he already has before asking taxpayers to fund his \$1.4-billion building project...a more basic question is whether this staggering spending spree for new construction would actually do anything to increase public safety." *Peter Eliasberg, legal director for the ACLU of Southern California and Margaret Winter, associate director of the ACLU's National Prison Project, LA Times, "Sheriff Baca, why the rush to build more jails?"*

"It would be a shameful waste of scant resources in pursuit of the same failed jail expansion policy that has already cost the taxpayers billions. There is no justification for pouring an additional \$1.4 billion for new construction into the already bloated jails budget when far better, quicker and cheaper alternatives are readily available." *Peter Eliasberg, legal director for the ACLU of Southern California and Margaret Winter, associate director of the ACLU's National Prison Project, LA Times, "Sheriff Baca, why the rush to build more jails?"*

"The sheriff is empowered to bring about a safe, rapid and dramatic decrease in the need for more jail space. As the U.S. Supreme Court pointed out this year in *Brown vs. Plata*, jurisdictions across the country are now safely lowering their prison populations...Baca should follow the lead of local governments across the nation that are addressing the fiscal crisis -- and breaking their addiction to mass over-incarceration." *Peter Eliasberg, legal director for the ACLU of Southern California and Margaret Winter, associate director of the ACLU's National Prison Project, LA Times, "Sheriff Baca, why the rush to build more jails?"*

"It would be the height of irresponsibility for the county to approve \$1.4 billion for a construction project before reviewing the results of the study that may well prove that the construction is simply unnecessary." *Peter Eliasberg, legal director for the ACLU of Southern California and Margaret Winter, associate director of the ACLU's National Prison Project, LA Times, "Sheriff Baca, why the rush to build more*

Expert opinions on LA County Jail Conditions

“Inmates in the Jails live in fear of deputy violence. It is typical for deputies to subject unresisting inmates to grossly excessive force by slamming inmates’ heads into walls, punching them in the face with their fists, kicking them with their boots, and shooting them multiple times with their tasers—and for those beatings to result in serious injuries to the inmates, including broken legs, fractured eye sockets, shattered jaws, broken teeth, severe head injuries, nerve damage, dislocated joints, collapsed lungs, and wounds requiring dozens of stitches and staples. Deputies sadistically beat inmates with serious mental illness. They have beaten inmates who are already in fragile medical condition, including inmates in wheelchairs. Deputies have beaten inmates for asking for medical treatment, for the color of their skin, or for no apparent reason at all. Deputies also enlist and encourage other inmates to carry out savage attacks. *From ACLU Lawsuit Alex Rosas and Jonathan Goodwin vs. Leroy Baca, Sheriff of Los Angeles County Jails, et al.,*

Despite Sheriff Baca’s actual knowledge of this pattern of violence and cover-ups, he has failed over a period of many years to take reasonable measures to halt the abuses.” *From ACLU Lawsuit Alex Rosas and Jonathan Goodwin vs. Leroy Baca, Sheriff of Los Angeles County Jails, et al.,*

’I have never experienced any facility exhibiting the volume and repetitive patterns of violence, misfeasance and malfeasance impacting the Los Angeles County Jail system.’” *Thomas Parker, a former FBI agent and Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau’s Los Angeles Field office, who oversaw the FBI investigation into the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department*

“Los Angeles -- like other big cities around the country - is in the midst of a crime drop so steep and profound, it has experts scratching their heads. Crime fell in 2011 for the ninth year in a row, to levels not seen in Los Angeles since half a century ago. The city had fewer crimes last year - and a million and a half more people - than it did when "Leave It To Beaver" made its debut in 1957.” *Sandy Banks, LA Times “A steep drop in crime, but do you feel safer?” Sandy Banks, LA Jan 7 2012*

“Hundreds of people have been wrongly imprisoned inside the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department jails in recent years, with some spending weeks behind bars before authorities realized those arrested were mistaken for wanted criminals, a Times investigation has found...The errors are so common that in some years people were jailed because of mistaken identity an average of once a day.” *Robert Faturechi and Jack Leonard, LA Times, “ID errors put hundreds in L.A. County jails” December 25, 2011*

“The allegations are piling up, yet Sheriff Lee Baca and his top aides continue to insist that everything’s under control and that the department can police itself, thank you very much. But it can’t.” *Editorial, LA Times, “What’s going on at our jails” September 29*

“One bit of leverage the supervisors do have is a measure of control over the jails’ budget. Threatening Baca’s funding may be enough to get his attention and persuade him to start

implementing some reforms...Even after decades of complaints and attempts at improvement, L.A. jails remain a blight. The board should not waste this opportunity, now that Baca is paying attention, to demand the reforms that he has previously ignored.” *Editorial, LA Times, “Fixing LA County's jails”*

“Since 2007, the last full year before the onset of the country's ongoing economic woes, Angelenos and others in the region have been told to brace for an anticipated surge in crime that has never come...To the contrary, the region has watched as a downward trend in crime that began nearly a decade ago has continued largely unabated, despite high unemployment, a horrible housing market and cuts to public services. This will be the ninth consecutive year of falling crime in Los Angeles.” *Joel Rubin, LA Times*

“How many times can Baca plead ignorance? This is just the latest in a series of objectionable responses that calls into question whether he is capable of running, let alone reforming, the nation's largest jail system.” *Editorial, LA Times, “Baca's jails are Baca's problem” December 2, 2011*

“The trouble with the Sheriff's Department, then, is not that it lacks civilian oversight or ideas for improvement, but rather that Sheriff Lee Baca is so insulated from normal channels of pressure that he simply does what he likes.” *Jim Newton, LA Times Op-ed, “A sheriff who does what he likes”*

A primary goal of the recommendations is “to keep people who come into contact with law enforcement because of mental illness, intoxication, or homelessness from becoming unnecessarily enmeshed in the criminal justice system” *Vera Institute of Justice “Los Angeles County Jail Overcrowding Reduction Project*

“During the study period there were 11,775 bookings for people arrested under P.C 849(b)(2) for public intoxication” *Vera Institute of Justice “Los Angeles County Jail Overcrowding Reduction Project*

“Individuals against whom no case or complaint was filed spent, on average, over 2.8 days in physical custody before release. This accounts for nine percent of all bookings, or more than 37,000 cases, over two years, and it amounts to an average of almost 52,000 bed days each year as a result of cases that were never filed or prosecuted” *Vera Institute of Justice “Los Angeles County Jail Overcrowding Reduction Project*

“In L.A County, most detention decisions are not based on an informed assessment of whether an individual poses a danger to society or is likely to return to court. Instead the decision is based on whether the arrestee has enough money to meet bail. In 2007 and 2008, only *three percent* of defendants made bail” *Vera Institute of Justice “Los Angeles County Jail Overcrowding Reduction Project*

“Many people spend time in jail for traffic-related charges...in 2008 traffic and vehicular offense charges made up 26 percent (161,315) of all arrest charges...The average length

of stay for all traffic bookings in 2008 was eight days.” *Vera Institute of Justice “Los Angeles County Jail Overcrowding Reduction Project*

A key finding was that “The lack of community treatment facilities translates into more defendants in custody” *Vera Institute of Justice “Los Angeles County Jail Overcrowding Reduction Project*

Expert opinions on prison overcrowding, realignment, construction, and reform

From the *Brown v. Plata* Supreme Court decision:

- There is "no realistic possibility that California could build itself out of this crisis, particularly given the State’s ongoing fiscal problems"

Key Reports

- “79 percent of adults and 80 percent of likely voters oppose paying more in taxes to maintain current funding levels for prisons and corrections.” *Public Policy Institute of California, Statewide Survey: Californians and Their Government*

Columns, Editorials and Opinion Pieces

- “We locked up thousands of people for the principal crime of having a mental illness, which is Dark Ages terrible if you ask me. And over the last few decades, with legislative and electoral support for longer and harsher sentences, we've built a \$10-billion industry in which thousands of people were sent to the state slam for nonviolent drug offenses. It would have been smarter to order them into rehab, and it might have cost taxpayers less. But humane, cost-effective policy doesn't fit our profile.” - *Steve Lopez, LA Times*

- “It is worth noting that a number of states, including Texas, Florida, Illinois, New York, Michigan, Ohio and Washington, have reduced their prison populations over the last 25 years, and independent research has found that not one of these states experienced an increase in crime or recidivism following the reductions. In fact, if drug treatment and other reentry services were provided, the rate of repeat offenses often went down.” *LA Times op-ed by Jeanne Woodford and Barry Krisberg*