

Hardin County Work
Camp

*Public Comments related to Facility
Closure*

As of 8/11/2015

The County Commissioners of Hardin County

OFFICE IN THE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

P.O. BOX 187

ELIZABETHTOWN, IL. 62931

Telephone: (618) 287-2251

Fax: (618) 287-2661

July 14, 2015

Dear Mr. Varner,

As Chairman of Hardin County in the State of Illinois I am concerned about what the economic impact of closing the Hardin County Work Camp would do to our County as well as the surrounding counties. The camp has provided much needed assistance to Municipalities, Federal and State Parks with trash cleanup and mowing. The inmates have provided manpower for painting parking lines for the cities and counties, along with moving furniture for the local Senior Citizens Centers.

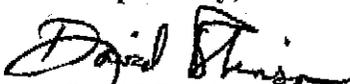
At the present time the inmates are working on the Court Room located in Elizabethtown with plastering and painting and have most recently removed shrubs from the property designated for a parking lot to serve the community that needs to do business at the Courthouse. For the past few winter seasons the inmates have helped remove snow/ice from the courthouse property. This could not have been done if it were not for their help due to the financial condition of our county.

With the understanding that the employees of the Hardin County Work Camp would be offered employment elsewhere there is a great concern of the loss of revenue to our county when the employee has to relocate their family. There are a lot of employees that own property in Hardin County and the schools would lose enrollment due to moving closer to the other facility. These employees also purchase groceries, fuel, and auto parts here and that helps the County by paying the Safety Tax on all their purchases.

The small amount of business that we have will suffer from the closure of the Work Camp. We, the Commissioners, would like to see more Work Camps provide Trade classes and teach inmates how to work. It is a very excellent program.

In closure, the county suffered a great loss when the Fluorspar Mines closed and again when the Work Camp was closed for a significant amount of time several years ago. Please take into consideration the concern for Hardin County of which I represent.

Respectfully,


David Robinson

**Statement of the John Howard Association of Illinois
Regarding the Proposed Closure of Hardin County Work Camp
Submitted by Jennifer Vollen-Katz, Executive Director
July 17, 2015**

The John Howard Association is Illinois' only independent, nonpartisan prison monitor. We work to achieve a fair, humane, and effective criminal justice system by promoting reform inside Illinois' adult and juvenile prisons.

As the only independent group that systemically monitors Illinois' correctional facilities, the John Howard Association (JHA) believes that we should not close the Hardin County Work Camp (Hardin). While Illinois needs to cut costs to become fiscally solvent, the relatively small savings resulting from closing this work camp weighed against the benefits it provides and the potential harms of eliminating the program do not justify closure.

In Fiscal Year 2015 the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) had an annual operating budget of \$1.3 billion, some of which was spent maintaining facilities that are old and in need of significant repair. While this is not ideal, it is the reality of our current correctional system which is vastly overcrowded – with an inmate population of just over 47,000 people in space designed to house just over 32,000. This situation means that operating facilities with less than ideal physical infrastructure is unfortunately the norm, if we do not want to further exacerbate the negative impacts of prison overcrowding. JHA notes that like many IDOC facilities, Hardin has considerable maintenance needs, including the added issue of needing replacement or continued leasing of the facility kitchen.

Absent a realized plan of prison population reduction, we assume that Hardin inmates and future similar inmates would instead be housed in other overcrowded and under-resourced IDOC facilities, where they will likely not have opportunities for productive activity equal to those at the work camp.

Assuming that the Governor's original budget calculation of an annual savings of \$1 million is realized through closing this facility, this is a small amount – particularly when compared to the benefits this facility provides to IDOC inmates housed here, including work, education, community service opportunities, and the benefits of the work camp to taxpayers in terms of uncaptured cost savings.

First, there are benefits to taxpayers from work camp inmates' service, which include cleaner roadways, flood preparation efforts, and maintenance of a garden that feeds inmates as well as provides produce for local food pantries, senior groups and schools. Second, due to increased opportunity at work camps, inmates can more easily earn sentencing credits for participation in positive activity, leading to earlier release which lowers the cost of incarcerating these inmates. Further, the basic benefit of a work camp facility, is that it offers inmates productive programming while they are in custody, and provides them with concrete educational benefits and job skills that support successful

reentry upon release – this can lead to taxpayer savings by turning former inmates into productive citizens and avoiding costs for returns to prison.

JHA recommends keeping Hardin open. Before closing any IDOC facility, Illinois' inmate population should be significantly reduced and true costs must be more comprehensively captured. At the current time, with Illinois' correctional system housing close to 15,000 inmates beyond design capacity, closure is not a sensible savings approach. Further, work camps provide inmates with sorely needed and beneficial educational and vocational skills which can lead to correctional system savings, public benefit and an increased opportunity for successful reentry.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Vollen-Katz

Executive Director

John Howard Association of Illinois

2015 Recipient of the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions

70 E. Lake Street, Suite 1116

Chicago, IL 60601

(312) 291-9555

Website at www.thejha.org



THE LIGHTHOUSE SHELTER

1101 North Madison • P.O. Box 732 • Marion, IL 62959
(618) 993-8180 • Fax (618) 997-3625

July 15, 2015

To whom it may concern:

The Lighthouse Shelter, a homeless facility in Marion, IL, opened in January of 2007. We had 15 residents to come in the first day and 30 by the end of the second day. When we purchased the building it turned out to be pretty much a brick shell needing new plumbing, flooring, sheetrock, electrical wiring and roofing. This was a 18 month project, beginning in 2005. A local contractor provided a carpenter to oversee the project.

The Hardin County Work Camp crew came to Marion every morning under the supervision of Alan Jackson and roofed our shelter building. On the rainy days the guys worked inside laying a tile floor. They scraped off the old tile and laid new tile, which is still in service today. They also painted and did various other inside projects. One inmate, just a young man, I remember, who was laying tile really enjoyed seeing the accomplishment of his finished project and said, "I would like to get a job laying tile when I get out of the work camp".

There were others who voiced the same opinion in roofing and different skill sets they had been taught either at the work camp or actually learned hands on when they helped with the remodeling at the shelter. In 2014 they provided us with a dollhouse and other craft items the inmates had made at the camp to use for a shelter fundraiser.

Unfortunately there are young people who make the wrong decision that can be life changing but helping them to learn structure, respect and skill sets can, in many cases, have a positive effect in changing their future when they are able to return to society. We have had Hardin County inmates, who were there for non violent crimes, move into the shelter when they were released and were then homeless. They were very good workers, well trained and motivated to find housing and employment.

In my opinion this speaks for the need of the Hardin County Facility and the various positive attributes that come out of that facility.

Sincerely,

Wanda Zwick
Board President

July 17, 2015

To: Ben Varner, Senior Analyst

From: Gary Gross

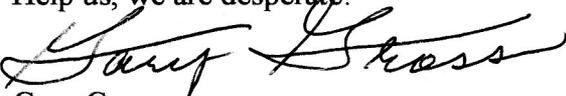
Re: Hardin Co. Work Camp Closure Hearing

Help! Help! Please advise Gov. Rauner that the Hardin Co. Work Camp is a valuable asset not only to Hardin Co. but also the counties of Gallatin and Saline as well. The camp employes approximately sixty-six workers from southern Illinois. We are a county that is losing population on a yearly basis. At the 2011 Census our residence total was 4,320 and each year the numbers drop. Every job here is essential as is every small business (less than 100). We count on the Hardin Co. Hospital (125 employees), Hardin Co. School Dist. (79 employees, Hastie Mining (60 employees) Hardin Co. Court House elected officials plus office help (45 employees) as well as the other small businesses to keep our little county alive and breathing.

I am a retired teacher from the school system here and a life long resident of Hardin Co. When our two schools consolidated in 1984 (Cave-in-Rock and Rosiclare) there were three classes of students in each grade with approximately 30 students per class (K-8) and the high school (9 thru 12 grade) with an enrollment of 325 students. That has ALL changed! Each grade now has two classes and the high school is less than 180. We are cutting teachers and classes such as band, art, auto mechanics, advanced math and science and numerous activities as a result of state budget cuts. The newest cutbacks include Headstart.

Having served on the Hardin Co. Hospital Board, Hardin Co. Housing Board, and Hardin Co. Golden Circle Board, I am aware of the difficulties that the state of Illinois faces. I realize that something has to be done to offset the deficit that is continuing to grow. I am not sure this "hole in the wall" work camp is the answer to the problem; however, it is extremely important to us! Just today the work crew mowed the Golden Circle lawn, cleaned the hill off at the court house with weed-eaters, and did some mowing and limb removal from our village in Elizabethtown. They were also responsible for assisting in the Ohio River Sweep and closing the Rosiclare flood gates, sand bagging when the Ohio River rose out of its banks, as well as highway cleanup just in our county. If not for this work crew we would not have the finances to have maintained all that has been accomplished.

Help us, we are desperate!



Gary Gross

Box 224

Elizabethtown, IL 62931

Phone (618) 287-2601

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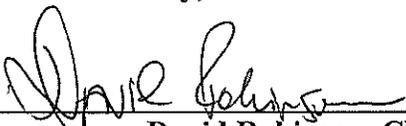
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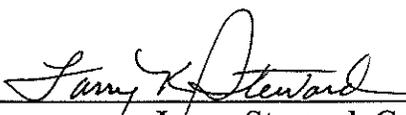
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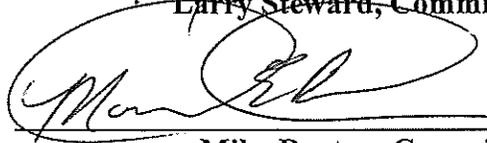
Sincerely,



David Robinson, Chairman



Larry Steward, Commissioner



Mike Burton, Commissioner

To the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability.

I am opposed to the closure of the Hardin County Work Camp as I feel this is an asset to the counties the Work Camp serves. The Governor has stated that there would be no jobs lost due to the closure and even though that is good news there are other factors that need to be considered.

The Hardin County Work Camp was opened in 1980 and has served the surrounding counties for the past 30+ years with millions of hours of community service. In my opinion this has given the Inmates of the Work Camp a positive attitude and a sense of pride in being able to provide a service they can be proud of. At the present time there is a population of 200 Inmates and a staff of 66.

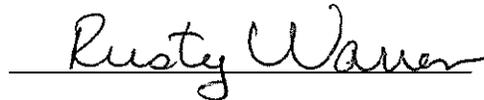
In this time of overcrowding in the Dept. of Corrections it doesn't make good sense in closing facilities. I know 200 inmates doesn't sound like a lot, but to the counties of Hardin, Saline and Gallatin they are priceless. Without the work crews there are a lot of projects and work that could not get done.

The work crews average 6,500 community service hours a month. To my knowledge this is the second highest number of man hours in the State of Illinois. Here are just a few of the projects these men were involved in:

1. Recently cleaned more than 116 miles of roadway and collected 1,810 bags of trash as part of Operation Pride.
2. Installed numerous bike racks along the Ohio River Scenic Byway.
3. Filled more than 7,400 sandbags for flood preparation.
4. Garden Project that grows more than 6,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables for use at the Work Camp and Shawnee Correctional Center. Also donated over half the produce to local food pantries, senior groups and schools.

As a retired Correctional Officer, I worked at the Hardin County Work Camp for a short period of time in the mid 1980's and I have witnessed the amount of work these Inmates have accomplished in the Communities they served. This is something the Inmates can be proud to be a part of and the Communities are very appreciative of the work performed.

In closing I am asking that the Hardin County Work Camp be allowed to remain open.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rusty Warren". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Rusty Warren

Retired Correctional Officer

Written Comments of AFSCME Council 31

Opposing the proposed closure of the

Hardin County Work Camp

Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability

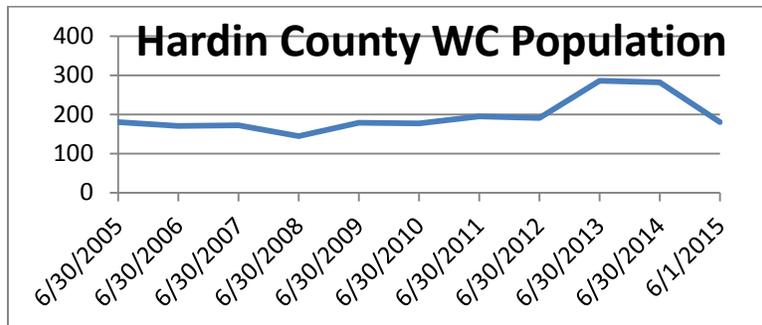
August 3, 2015

AFSCME Council 31 opposes the proposed closure of the Hardin County Work Camp. Hardin is a 200 bed, minimum security Work Camp which employs 61. To be eligible for Hardin, inmates must be within 4 years of release, must agree to participate in community service work programs, and must have a record compatible with an unfenced correctional facility open to the surrounding community. In addition to work programs, Hardin offers a Construction Occupations vocational education program, Adult Basic Education and GED classes.

IDOC admits the closure would save only \$1 million annually, and less in FY 16. This minimal savings would cause the elimination of 61 IDOC staff positions, impacting not only the staff and their families but surrounding communities. It would further reduce the ability of IDOC to offer programs to inmates proven to decrease recidivism. As such the closure would not be in line with the growing bipartisan consensus on the need to affirmatively take steps to reduce recidivism and provide alternatives to incarceration.

Hardin provides skill-building through education and community service

Inmates want to serve their sentence at Hardin because they can fill their time productively and earn income - opportunities not always available at other overcrowded DOC facilities. Hardin's rated capacity is 150 beds, but DOC added beds to accommodate 200 inmates. It has consistently operated at or above the rated capacity. Hardin's population spiked in 2013 and 2014 because Hardin was used to house Tamms minimum security inmates after that facility closed.



Engaging inmates in work related programs has been proven effective at reducing recidivism. Numerous studies evaluating the effectiveness of adult corrections programs find correctional

industries and vocational education programs to be among the most effective prison-based programs.

The Hardin County Work Camp goes further, giving inmates an opportunity to make reparations for their offenses by performing meaningful work that benefits a community. At the same time, living at Hardin – which has no security fencing – and working at sites in surrounding communities help acclimate the soon-to-be-released inmates to a less regimented and secure environment.

To further ensure success, Hardin hosts informational programming to targeted populations including: IDES – special employment services for veterans; Secretary of State’s Office – reinstating a revoked or suspended driver’s license; DHFS – responsibilities under the Child Support system.

The Construction Occupations Class offers vocational education in the construction trades while building houses for charities. The class donates several houses every year to Habitat for Humanity and Lutheran Social Services.

The Work Camp Garden Project grows over 6,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables annually on the grounds, over half of which is donated to food pantries and senior groups. The Garden Project recently implemented a basic beekeeping program with 3 operational beehives.

Hardin work crews average over 6,500 community service hours per month. Recent examples include installing numerous bike racks throughout Southern Illinois along the Ohio River Scenic Byway, filling over 1,400 sandbags in preparation for flooding for use in the surrounding communities, and assisting the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in preparing a wooded area in Hardin County for a controlled burn.

IDOC ignores COGFA, State Facilities Closure Act

The required economic impact study provided by IDOC was unresponsive. It lacked the information required by the Act. It also did not address specific questions left unanswered in the agency’s closure recommendation filed July 8 which IDOC said would be addressed in the study.

The Act requires that the agency provide “the economic impact on existing communities in the vicinity of the State facility and any potential facility” (30 ILCS 608/5-10 a 7). Based on its filing, IDOC defined the area of study not as communities like Cave-In-Rock, Elizabethtown or other towns in the vicinity of Hardin County Work Camp, but as the entire Southern region of the state. While the author notes that there would be localized impacts from the closure, “Looking at the impacts from the perspective of Southern Illinois, there would be no additions or reductions – merely a reallocation.” Defining the region of study so broadly renders the study meaningless.

Apparently IDOC did not provide the author with any specific information about the impact on employees or inmates. In its recommendation, IDOC states that most employees will go to Vienna CC or Shawnee CC, but does not provide specifics. The Act requires that the agency provide “the effect of the closure of the facility on those employees” (30 ILCS 608/5-10 a 2) and “the location ...to which the functions and employees ... would be moved” (30 ILCS 608/5-10 a 3).

Further, it should be noted that both Vienna CC and Shawnee CC are an hour drive one way from Hardin County WC, and transfer to any other facility would require an even longer commute. It is entirely possible that, even if IDOC can accommodate all Hardin employees at Vienna and Shawnee, employees may not “remain in their existing residences” as the author assumes.

In its recommendation, IDOC makes clear that the Hardin closure will eliminate positions from IDOC, which largely provides the cost savings. So while the existing staff at Hardin may be given vacant positions in prisons elsewhere, there are 61 jobs that pay a livable wage in Hardin County today which will be gone if the closure plan moves forward. That will have an economic impact. But the author states – presumably because it was what he was instructed by IDOC – that “current employees and inmates will be redistributed...Current expenditures...would be transferred.” The author states that “the only difference would be in the location from which these expenditures were made”. IDOC presents an economic impact study that not only overlooks the real impact of closure on the surrounding communities; it completely ignores the loss of jobs.

Finally, IDOC stated in its recommendation, filed July 8, that it could not answer two key questions asked by COGFA: the ability to support the functions of the closing Work Camp (question # 8) and the impact on the services delivered at Hardin (question # 9). There is no excuse for failing to provide in writing critical information on whether other facilities will deliver services like Hardin County’s produce garden, community work programs and construction vocational education.

Negative impact on inmates due to loss of programs and opportunities

In addition to offering work to willing inmates, Hardin offers a Construction Occupations vocational education program and Adult Basic Education and GED classes. As IDOC failed to provide COGFA Commissioners information in writing about how these services would be provided after a closure, a Commissioner asked IDOC these questions at the public hearing. In response to questions about whether inmates would be offered the same kinds of programs at their receiving facilities and whether those programs are currently available, IDOC said it had available beds at other work camps, and also said Shawnee and Vienna maintain outside clearance, meaning inmates sent to those prisons could work outside the prison. IDOC can always say it has available beds, as it has historically added more beds – in gyms, healthcare units, or classrooms. However such overcrowding happens to the detriment of programming, which has a particular impact at the work camps.

Available beds and available programs are two very different questions. During the peak of overcrowding at Hardin after the Tamms closure, the facility couldn't send out work crews because there were too many inmates and not enough staff. While Shawnee and Vienna may technically be able to allow for inmate crews to leave the grounds to work, unless IDOC is investing in additional staff at those facilities such programs will not happen. If IDOC is investing in additional staff at those facilities, that would erode the already paltry \$1 million in targeted savings.

IDOC also said education courses are available statewide. While there are programs at most facilities, there are long waiting lists for these programs. For example, in FY 13 there were some 1,000 DOC inmates waiting for GED classes, and over 7,000 waiting for supposedly mandatory Adult Basic Education classes. While there are education and vocational programs at Shawnee and Vienna, less than 20% of inmates are engaged in those programs. At Hardin a third of inmates are in education and vocational education classes.

Few cost savings and exaggerated capital costs

IDOC states annualized cost savings from closing Hardin will be \$1 million. IDOC stated at the public hearing that it cannot safely close Hardin before the end of the calendar year, so FY 16 savings will be much less.

While IDOC's flawed economic impact study did not identify local losses from the closure, there was ample testimony from community leaders in Hardin and surrounding counties on the potential economic impact. Not only would 61 good paying jobs be eliminated, but the loss of good works performed by inmates – thousands of pounds of produce for senior centers and food pantries, houses for Habitat for Humanity – would also be lost. The losses do not justify the savings.

IDOC says in its closure recommendation that Hardin needs \$9.8 million in capital upgrades including electrical upgrades, a new dietary, a back-up generator, replaced water treatment, and telephone upgrades. IDOC says this figure derives from a survey conducted in 2009, but admits that not all the work is urgent. We have seen frequently in the past that IDOC finds much to fix if a facility is slated for closure, which is suddenly less urgent if that facility does not close.

In particular there was testimony at the public hearing from Hardin County employees that the kitchen fire at Hardin County some 3 years ago was not as devastating as once thought. There have been recent attempts made to repair the kitchen, and employees have identified state surplus appliances and a repair plan which can be accomplished for just a few thousand dollars.

We urge the Commission to reject the Governor's request to close Hardin County Work Camp.

To: Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability

From: Terry Angleton, Asst. Director of Hardin County EMA

Subject: Facility Being Closed Hardin County Work Camp

Hardin County Work Camp is a very important and valued resource of Hardin County. The work camp provides services to all three towns in our county, Cave In Rock, Rosiclare and Elizabethtown. Some of the routine services the Hardin County Work Camp crews provide are assisting the towns with clean up of roads, removal of storm debris and limbs, set up and clean up for county holiday celebrations, assisting all three towns with drift wood clean up along the Ohio River.

The Hardin County Work Camp also makes our small community look neat and clean and makes us all proud of Hardin County. The largest contributions the work camp provides is the 1000's of sand bags that are filled during the floods of 2055,2009,2001 and 2012, without this service we could not have sand-bagged on our own. The above mentioned activities are not the only services provided for Hardin County. In closing on behalf of Hardin County EMA I wish to thank Hardin County Work Camp, Road Crews and officers for all the excellent services that they provide to Hardin County Work Camp. Please keep our Hardin County Work Camp open. Hardin County Work Camp is a very valuable resource, we are proud to have as a part of Hardin County.

Terry Angleton

Hardin County EMA Assistant Director

Unek48@yahoo.com

Dear Sirs: I send this e-mail to oppose the closing of the Hardin Co. Facility. Hardin Co. Is one of the poorest counties in the state. I am pastor of The First Apostolic Church in Rosiclare . I have people in the church who work there & closing would cause un-needed hardship on them! In addition, our communities are blessed to have the inmates do great work in them. It is not my desire to be critical, however it seems that because our voting base is small, we are considered expendable! Please do what you can NOT to close this much needed facility.

Thanking your cooperation in this matter, I remain:

Sincerely yours,
Lowell D. Gowins
316 Charles St.
Rosiclare

Butch

The Hardin County Work Camp (HCWC) is beneficial to my self-employed businesses. Though my businesses may not seem like much to the larger world, they are my means of income and making ends meet. (My husband has poor health and unfortunately had to retire early.) Some HCWC employees have enrolled their children into my day care home. These have been dependable paying clients whose children attend faithfully. I have also had employees from HCWC boost my second business-lodging. When the Ohio River has been high, causing traveling harder and even dangerous, workers inquire about my lodging. Another reason they like to lodge is to shorten their commute, allowing more rest time. Closing HCWC will make my businesses as well as other businesses suffer in this already economic challenged area. Some employees will be forced to move their families, leaving this beautiful Shawnee National Forest area, yet again taking away from this county. I would love to see more help provided and more revenue enter the area rather than once again be taken away from this community. I urge you to keep HCWC open for the small businesses of Hardin County.

Sincerely,
Brenda Jenkins

Dear Sirs:

I pastor The First Apostolic Church in Rosiclare. I have people in the church who would be affected by the proposed closure. In addition our county, one of the states most economically oppressed, utilizes the various work crews to do tasks that are impossible to fund on limited budgets.

I certainly don't want to be critical in an unwarranted manner, however it appears that because our voting base is small, we are considered second class citizens.

Please reverse what seems to be a forgone conclusion and prove me wrong!

Sincerely,
Lowell Gowins

Butch

The Honorable Bruce Rauner
Governor of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Rauner:

I am very concerned with the news that you are considering the closure of the Hardin County Work Camp. If that were to happen, it would have a devastating effect on an already struggling county.

Frankly, I don't understand why you would target this county. I am sure you would find more logical ways to reduce the State budget if you would set your sights farther north.

The closure of the Work Camp would have a negative impact on this newspaper which has served Hardin County since 1871 and has supported members of the Hurford family for over 50 years -- my family. You see, the Work Camp is one of the largest employers of Hardin County families who, in turn, support local businesses. With each business that closes its doors, those that remain struggle even more. This newspaper could lose advertisers and subscribers especially if more people leave the county to seek employment.

The county has already lost many young people who cannot support their families here due to limited employment opportunities. Do some research and take a look at the reduction in population in our school district over the last 20 years. That is one good example of the ill effects of a plan such as yours. The school district struggles as it is.

In the fall of 2014, the majority of Hardin County voters marked your name on the ballots at the polls in an effort to bring fresh opportunities to the area. Those voters, though not powerful in numbers on their own, enabled you to take the highest office in State government through cumulative votes statewide. I doubt that those voters expected to hear within a few short months of your intent to slash their very existence with the sharp blade that you wield.

I can only conclude that you are looking at the people of Hardin County as objects that can be cast away at your will, rather than human beings who only wish to continue to raise their families in this haven of peace and tranquility that is Hardin County.

None of my children or other family members is employed by the Hardin County Work Camp. Friends? Yes, many of them. Nor does my interest in this matter have anything to do with politics. I have never worked for a particular political party. I have always voted for the candidate whom I thought would bring good things to this county. The hope is always there for better days ahead.

I appeal to you to protect the well being of the county that I have called home for over 50 years. I ask you to abandon any thoughts of closing the Work Camp and turn your attention to other areas where budget cuts can be made.

I also challenge you to take a closer look at this second smallest county in Illinois and realize its potential for industry and tourism. There is little argument that it holds as much natural beauty -- if not more -- as any other county in Illinois with its rolling hills, sparkling river, lakes and streams, lush green valleys, and rocky bluffs. Remember that part of the County is within the Shawnee National Forest. The potential for development is here; it just seems that the county is a jewel that is repeatedly overlooked by our peers in government.

Respectfully,
Julie Smith, publisher
Hardin County Independent

To Whom It May Concern:

I am Rev. E. James Rivett and serve as a Volunteer Chaplain at the Hardin County Work Farm and use this email as a written statement of my concerns regarding the closing of Hardin County Work Farm.

The Work Farm has provided invaluable service to the Southern Illinois region in the following:

They provide work for community persons in the Southern Illinois Region - jobs that are sorely needed;

The inmates have provide and done work in the communities to assist in clean up details;

The inmates provided a great community effort in assisting with the Tornado that hit in Harrisburg and Saline County;

The facility provides much needed economic impact in the area on local communities that will be lost and no soon replacement is in sight given our present economy.

It is respectfully requested that you withdraw the closing of the Hardin County Work Farm.

Thank you for your consideration. We are praying for a decision that reflects God's goodness and your wisdom.

Rev. Rivett .

I am writing in regards to the closure of the Hardin County Work Camp. As a professional in the behavioral and mental health field as well as a resident of Hardin County, I am very aware of how our environment can influence each person's productivity and emotional stability.

According to the Social Impact Research Center website, Hardin County's unemployment rate is 8.9% compared to the State's rate of 6.2%. Additionally, the poverty rate is 20.3% compared to the State's rate of 14.6%. These economic statistics give testament to the social well being as well as the financial crisis among the residents of Hardin County. Unemployment rates and poverty rates influence individuals' behavioral and mental health well being which in turn can become a financial burden on the law enforcement and medical field. By utilizing more of the medical field or mental health agencies, Medicaid is being utilized more which is costing the state a significant amount of money. To clarify, individuals that live within poverty and/or are unemployed, are more prone to depression, anxiety, and/or need resources that can assist them in surviving. All of which is a financial burden to the State of Illinois and is billed to Medicaid by local mental health agencies as well as the medical facilities.

Due to the rural geographic location of Southern Illinois, especially such counties as Hardin, Pope and Gallatin, there are limited resources that are available to Southern Illinois. Majority of State funding appears to be given to northern Illinois, most specifically Cook county. By eliminating the Hardin County Work Camp, you will inevitably be reducing the sustainability of the county and Southern Illinois. With the Work Camp providing jobs to residents of Hardin County and surrounding counties, families are able to support themselves and continue to be in Hardin County. Due to the geographical isolation in many areas of Southern Illinois, those in Hardin County that are unable to find another job, which is very plausible due to very limited employment opportunities, will need to relocate. Without a doubt, this will create a domino effect in Hardin County. With residents having to leave the area, the local hospital, which has been in financial instability for some time, will have limited residents to serve. With their possible closure, and as one of the top employers of the county along with the Work Camp and School, residents will indeed need to relocate due to the financial burden of having to travel long distances in order to find employment. With the hospital, goes the local businesses and the money coming into the county. If the Work Camp is closed now, the very soon future of Hardin County can easily be seen as a ghost town where it once was a quiet, historic, beautiful area that will be a wasteland of tomorrow's hopes and yesterday's memories.

I am very aware that there are other aspects to consider when making a devastating decision to close the Work Camp, but as a mental health professional, who works within this county, that has studied the impact of economic crisis on mental health crisis, I know that the decision to close the Work Camp can deeply impact Hardin County and its residents. For the past 6 years, I have made Hardin County my home and its residents by people. The residents, and myself, are asking the Governor, and the State of Illinois, to allow us to continue sustaining our community. For we are proud people and want to stay proud people of Hardin County!

Dillon Wheaty

My name is Bob Gribble. I worked for 16 of my 25 yrs with corrections at the Hardin County Work Camp... For several of my years there I took a work crew to several different job sights helping clean up towns and communities , cutting grass, brush, snow removal and collecting trash. We also helped the Forrest service build picnic tables that went to parks all over the Shawnee National Forrest. We cleaned up along state highways in several counties and along senic areas so tourists coming to this area had pretty views not trash along the roads. I taught inmates how to mow and weed eat. Many inmates that were from the city had never seen grass or trees before. They always ask, " where did all these trees come from?" The inmates learned to work as a team when helping in emergency situations, such as flooding and cleaning up after tornadoes. They helped in sandbagging and moving items during floods which affected counties, towns and small communities. The Work Camp helped with putting up the flood gates along the Ohio river in Rosiclare. The Work Camp has helped these small towns and communities along the Ohio and Wabash Rivers that do not have the man power or money to hire manual labor, due to state government cuts. The carpentry class at the camp has helped fabricated many homes for Habitat for Humanity. They have also built special doll houses, bird houses, and etc for community fund raisers . During winter months I took inmate crews to township and county roads to cut brush from roadsides so wild life (deer etc) could be seen and to avoid car crashes. To walking trails in the parks ,picking up trash , to clearing brush from trails and senic viewing areas. I feel that The Hardin County Work Camp helps the inmates, well some, strive to become a better person in showing them new skills. They also have seen how people come together when something bad happens and turns it into a positive. The Hardin County Work Camp is vital to the surrounding towns, townships and counties for all that is done.....Please keep Hardin County Work Camp open for Employees and all the area served by the Camp!

Bob Gribble

My name is Keith Collier. I recently retired as a Correctional Lieutenant after 30 years with the Illinois Department of Corrections. I would like to go on record as being opposed to the closure of the Hardin County Work Camp. During my career I witnessed the implementation, operation, success and often failure of numerous programs and initiatives designed to reduce costs and reign in budgets. Without question, recidivism is one of the biggest contributing factors to the ever increasing budget of the IDOC. After 26 years at the Shawnee Correctional Center, I transferred to the Hardin County Work Camp. Upon arriving the first thing I noticed was the building trades program. I was immediately impressed with the skills that the inmates involved in this program were able to gain, while benefiting charitable organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. The inmates who completed this program were leaving with a marketable skill, one that would enable them to become a working taxpayer upon their release. This was very different than the "warehousing" of inmates that I was used to, where inmates were released back to the streets without any realistic hope of becoming gainfully employed.

I also witnessed a change in many inmates who were involved in sandbagging efforts when floods ravaged many local communities. The gratitude expressed by these communities gave many of these inmates a sense of pride and accomplishment, improving their outlook and creating an improved work ethic. The same goes for the many work crews that assist numerous organizations and towns year round. Inmates discover that they have something to contribute and develop improved working skills.

The vegetables harvested from the on grounds garden going to local food pantries and senior centers is also a source of pride to both the inmates and staff of the Hardin County Work Camp. These examples all contribute to an improved individual returning home, a better man. If we ever hope to curb the recidivism rate, we have to return these men to our streets better prepared to become productive members of society & Hardin County Work Camp does just that. Closing this type of facility will not save money in the long run, it will cost money.

Thank You,
Keith D. Collier
Golconda, IL

Laurie Eby
Deputy Director
COGFA

Ms. Eby,

I want to register our objection to the dearth of information provided to COGFA in IDOC's Hardin County Work Camp closure recommendation.

The economic impact study provided by IDOC to COGFA was unresponsive. It lacked the information required by the Act. It also did not address specific questions left unanswered in the agency's closure recommendation filed July 8 which IDOC said would be addressed in the study.

The Act requires that the agency provide "the economic impact on existing communities in the vicinity of the State facility and any potential facility" (30 ILCS 608/5-10 a 7). Based on its filing, IDOC defined the area of study not as communities like Cave-In-Rock, Elizabethtown or other towns in the vicinity of Hardin County Work Camp, but as the entire Southern region of the state. While the author notes that there would be localized impacts from the closure, "Looking at the impacts from the perspective of Southern Illinois, there would be no additions or reductions – merely a reallocation." Defining the region of study so broadly renders the study meaningless.

Apparently IDOC did not provide the author with any specific information about the impact on employees or inmates. In its recommendation, IDOC states that most employees will go to Vienna CC or Shawnee CC, but does not provide specifics. The Act requires that the agency provide "the effect of the closure of the facility on those employees" (30 ILCS 608/5-10 a 2) and "the location ...to which the functions and employees ... would be moved" (30 ILCS 608/5-10 a 3).

Further, it should be noted that both Vienna CC and Shawnee CC are an hour drive one way from Hardin County WC, and transfer to any other facility would require an even longer commute. It is entirely possible that, even if IDOC can accommodate all Hardin employees at Vienna and Shawnee, employees may not "remain in their existing residences" as the author assumes.

In its recommendation, IDOC makes clear that the Hardin closure will eliminate positions from IDOC. Why else would there be any cost savings? So while the existing staff at Hardin may be given vacant positions in prisons elsewhere, there are 61 jobs that pay a livable wage in Hardin County today which will be gone if this plan moves forward. That will have an economic impact. But the author states – presumably because it was what he was told – that "current employees and inmates will be redistributed...Current expenditures...would be transferred." The author states that "the only difference would be in the location from which these expenditures were made". IDOC presents an economic impact study that not only

overlooks the real impact of closure on the surrounding communities; it completely ignores the loss of jobs.

Finally, in responding to COGFA questions 8 and 9 in its recommendation filed July 8, IDOC said that the economic impact study would provide answers. It seems odd that IDOC would rely on an outside academic to answer questions on the ability of existing prisons to deliver Hardin's services as well as employ staff. Clearly, this study provides no information on whether other facilities will deliver services like Hardin County's produce garden, community work programs and construction vocational education.

At the hearing on the State Museum closures, Commissioner Nekritz commented that the information provided by IDNR was much less responsive than that provided during previous closures. The same is now true of IDOC. We urge COGFA to direct IDOC to refile its economic impact study and provide full information as required under the Act.

Thank you.

Anne Irving
Director of Public Policy
AFSCME Council 31
312-641-6060 ext. 4324

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Scott H. Farner, and I am currently a Shift Supervisor at the Dixon Springs Impact Incarceration Program. I began my career with the Illinois Department of Corrections in May of 1995 at Centralia Correctional Center as a Correctional Officer. I transferred to Shawnee Correctional Center in 1998. I received a promotion to Correctional Sergeant in 2008, and was promoted to Correctional Lieutenant in 2010. I have a Bachelor's of Science in Business Management and a Master's of Science in Criminal Justice. I also teach Criminal Justice for Missouri Baptist University. I am writing to express my sincere displeasure in the possible closure of the Hardin County Work Camp. If the closure occurs, the State of Illinois and the Illinois Department of Corrections will be doing a huge disservice to the inmates, staff, and communities of Southern Illinois.

As a Correctional Lieutenant, I had the opportunity to be assigned as a Shift Supervisor at the Hardin County Work Camp. During my year at the HCWC, I observed many various projects and programs and for the first time in 19 years felt as if the work I performed was having a positive impact upon the offenders. I can personally attest to the need for the Hardin County Work Camp and the cost-to benefit analysis.

The Hardin County Work Camp is a satellite facility of the Shawnee Correctional Center. Before the closure of Tamms Correctional Center, the HCWC housed 180 inmates. After the closure of Tamms, the HCWC bedspace was nearly doubled to house 288 inmates. It was a huge undertaking for maintenance and security to meet the operational needs of the added inmates in an already overcrowded prison system, but the staff at the HCWC and Shawnee Correctional center went above and beyond to ensure a safe, secure environment.

According to the Illinois Department of Corrections, *"The mission of the Department of Corrections is to protect the public from criminal offenders through a system of incarceration and supervision which securely segregates offenders from society, assures offenders of their constitutional rights and maintains programs to enhance the success of offenders' reentry into society."* During my 20 plus years of experience only two of the four facilities I have worked at come close to fulfilling the IDOC's Mission, Hardin County Work camp and the Dixon Springs Impact Incarceration Program.

If one of the many goals of the Illinois Department of Corrections is to "maintain programs to enhance the success of offender's reentry into society", the Hardin County Work Camp accomplishes this goal. There are many programs in the IDOC at all facilities, but the Hardin County Work camp offers offenders programs that greatly impact their lives and better prepare them to return to society as productive citizens.

The Hardin County Work Camp has educational programs to help offenders earn their G.E.D. The vocational education program affords them the opportunity to learn construction skills and college credits that will assist in the reentry into society. Classes and instruction in drafting, carpentry, woodworking, plumbing and electricity are offered. The construction class also performs valuable community service work. The construction class at the Hardin county Work Camp remodeled and refurbished a nursing home in Marion, Illinois that is now the Lighthouse Shelter, a shelter for the homeless. The construction program also builds five houses a year for the Habitat for Humanity charity, which helps people obtain affordable housing. The offenders that have worked in this program have helped thousands of people in Southern Illinois, and they receive a sense of self-worth and a boost of self-esteem, from the work they have performed while learning valuable construction trades.

The Hardin County Work Camp also sends out work crews daily, to many communities in Southern Illinois. These work crews provide valuable community service and assist with cleaning, maintenance, mowing, painting, special projects and emergency work following natural disasters. The Hardin County Work camp sends work crews to Elizabethtown, Rosiclare, Cave-In-Rock, Golconda, Harrisburg, Carrier Mills, Ridgeway, and other communities in the district. Many of these communities lack the resources or manpower to complete the work required of them, and the surrounding counties would suffer a great deal without the help from the HCWC.

During the flood season of 2011, the Hardin County Work Camp sent crews to assist with disaster relief. According to then Acting Director Gladys C. Taylor, "IDOC is proud to serve an important role in providing emergency assistance to communities in time of great need, and I commend the leadership and professionalism of the IDOC staff which organize and supervise community work details. Public service projects teach inmates invaluable lessons, increase their self-esteem, and allow them to help people. They also give citizens a chance to see inmates working and giving back to the community."

On February 29, 2012 a tornado devastated the city of Harrisburg, Illinois. The staff and inmates of the Hardin County Work Camp assisted in the disaster relief sending work crews and providing hours of public service. The offenders that I knew talked about how seeing all of that destruction which took six lives, affected them and how greatly they were impacted by being able to help the people of Harrisburg.

The Hardin County Work Camp also has a garden that produces fresh fruit and vegetables for several local charities. Hardin County is one of the most impoverished counties in the state of Illinois, with one of the highest unemployment rates. The inmates who work in the garden feel a great sense of satisfaction knowing that they are helping to feed people in need of assistance. There is a great deal of community service and charitable work provided by the inmates at HCWC. Closing the work camp would have a negative effect on the communities of Gallatin, Hardin, Johnson, Pope, and Saline Counties. If Hardin County is closed it would be a great disservice to the inmates, and an even greater disservice to the entire region.

The poverty levels and unemployment rates in Southern Illinois are higher than elsewhere in the state. Alexander County has a 7.5% unemployment rate, Johnson County has a 7.4% unemployment rate, Pulaski County has a 7.3% unemployment rate, and Hardin County has an unemployment rate of 7.0%. How is the closure of the Hardin County Work Camp going to affect the unemployment rates in an impoverished area? Governor Rauner claims no jobs will be lost, but what about the staff that lives in Hardin county? What about the staff that commutes and spends money in Hardin County? The economic impact will be severe for a sparsely populated rural area in Southern Illinois to lose yet another employer.

According to the IDOC's FY 2014 Annual Report, the inmate population on July 1, 2013 was 48,867. That is 48,867 inmates in a system that was designed to house 33,000. The IDOC is seriously overcrowded. How does closing a facility that has been housing 288 inmates help in the effort to ease overcrowding? What will the operational impacts of the proposed closure cost in terms of additional housing in an already overcrowded prison system? Will Illinois residents see another Early Release program, such as the failed Operation MGT Push in which inmates with violent records were released and committed additional violent crimes upon release? Will the system be able to safely and securely accommodate more offenders in an overcrowded prison system?

A more serious part of the IDOC's mission is "to protect the public from criminal offenders through a system of incarceration and supervision which securely segregates offenders from society", how is this achieved by taking valuable bed space away from an already dangerously overcrowded system? Where will the low security level offenders be housed? How will it improve operations for the Illinois Department of Corrections? Where will the cost savings take place, if no jobs are lost? The answer to these rhetorical questions is quite clear. It will cause more overcrowding, cost more money, and produce dismal results. In the end the only thing that is achieved is an even higher unemployment rate in a economically oppressed area in Southern Illinois.

The men and women who work for the Illinois Department of Corrections literally put their lives on the line every day, to serve and protect the people of the state of Illinois. For the last 12 years, state employees have been used as pawns in a poorly played game of chess. Our elected officials are playing with the very public servants that risk their lives for the people of this state. Public servants are under attack, from our elected politicians. The elected career politicians are the ones responsible for creating the fiscal problems in Illinois, not the professional working men and women who protect society in a very stressful and thankless job. If you want to see real change, perhaps start with closing the Capitol Building in Springfield. Closing it and letting go

both the House and Senate might be the only way Illinois, all of Illinois, not just Chicago gets back to any semblance of the great state that it used to be.

In closing, I respectfully request and strongly encourage that the Hardin County Work Camp remain open to provide a safe, humane alternative for offenders to gain invaluable skills that will help them to successfully return to society. The staff at the Hardin County Work Camp goes above and beyond providing community service. Warehousing inmates in an overcrowded system does nothing to help achieve the goals of the IDOC mission. The opportunities and services that are provided at the work camps and boot camps, have real and lasting impacts on the lives of the offenders. The cost of keeping recidivism rates lower and making honest productive citizens isn't just measured in monetary value, but the value we as a society place on our fellow human beings. Please do not close the Hardin County Work Camp.

Scott H. Farner

Once more as a lifetime resident of southern Illinois, I am saddened and shocked at the heartless politics of Chicago. Check your history and remember that this state was settled from the bottom up. Beauty and patriotism survive each and every day. The people here matter. Their facilities and jobs matter. Many believe that this is the best part of the state. Please stop attacking us by constantly bleeding us dry of resources and opportunities. We matter. Leave the Hardin County Work Camp active and successful. Restore their kitchen and make it useful and effective.

A taxpayer,
Shirley Naas

Please do not close Hardin County work camp. So. Il. People have no jobs. Please do not take the few away. I have lived up North. Take some of the jobs away there.they have other jobs they can get....down here None. You want them to move.....they can not afford that.. All their relatives live in Hardin county.....thy live on land that comes from family. I am not connected to anyone from there.....I write because I just care. Care for So. Illinois.

Judy & John Cowgur
