

# California Correctional Supervisors Organization

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## TO THE SACRAMENTO BEE EDITORIAL

On behalf of the CALIFORNIA CORRECTIONAL SUPERVISORS ORGANIZATION (CCSO) and each and every State employee working for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), I would like to set the record straight regarding our salary. Dear fellow **Californians**, you are the victim of what is known as “Media Frenzy.”

I recently read a news article concerning our Department and overtime salaries that left me feeling dismayed. In this article, the News media was continuing their barrage about how we “Prison Guards” are being over paid and constantly exploiting overtime pay. First, let me say the use of the term “Prison Guard” is a childish attempt to belittle us, and suggest we lack a professional education and basic knowledge. I joined the Department immediately following my tour of duty as United States Marine, and as many others in our department whom have also served our beautiful country we now serve the citizens of California as Correctional Peace Officers, standing a post that many would not want to endure. Most citizens in our communities do not realize or comprehend the trials and tribulations we face each and every single day inside the prison walls securing their safety and security. Honestly, I believe the public at large does not want to know what goes on behind the prison gates - Out of Sight and Out of Mind. The public does not often hear the good that is being done in corrections, but rather simply the perceived unnecessary overtime that officers are being paid.

I think I can speak for my fellow correctional officer’s when I say we are not looking for sympathy, chose this profession. We cannot sit by as the News media, and members of the Legislature disrespect our profession and expect us to say nothing. I respectfully remind the public that the prison population (dangerous felons) is approximately 170,000, inmates and increasing each year, prompting us to send some prisoners out of state.

Correctional Peace Officers did not arrest these prisoners, or sentence them; yet, we are charged with the responsibility to rehabilitate them and maintain them in a safe environment, away from the general public. We are also charged with providing safety and security for the many staff employed to educate and prepare the inmates for re-entry into the community upon release. The mission we accomplish as a Department with this overbearing population seems to be often overlooked. It takes more than just a formal education to work inside some of the toughest and most dangerous prisons in the world. It takes many other qualities such

as pride, honor, respect and the ability to remain professional in a stressful environment. There are approximately 15 staff assaults that occur, every single day inside California's prisons. And of those assaults many are of inmates throwing feces or urine at officers, known to us as being "GASSED". I know firsthand exactly how it feels to wonder after this form of an assault if this is the time I may catch some type of transmittable disease, which may be introduced to my home and family. What salary and benefit package would you accept to work in such an environment? The department of Corrections and Rehabilitation fails each and every year to recruit enough people to fill all of the vacancies with in the ranks of correctional officers and supervisors. High vacancy rates leads to the much touted overtime with little mention that a large portion is forced overtime.

Yes, CDCR is addressing the issue of overtime. But let's be clear, in a business as large as the existing prison system, it is highly improbable to operate a prison system per Court ordered and Legislative mandates, 24 hours a day 7 days a week safely and securely, while at the same time keeping the general public out of harms way. Overtime is a necessary "evil" to accomplish the Department's various daily missions, programs, and mandates.

Unscheduled and unforeseen events also drive overtime. For example, staff assaults that result in mandatory "lock-down", inmate riots, inmate stabbings, gassings, homicides, suicides, mental health or medical problems. These events do not stop or pause while there is a "shift" change of staff. Staff cannot "go home" or "sign out" during a riot, during a stabbing, when a suicide, or medical problem occurs. We as dedicated State employees must stay and address the incident. The fact is that if a Correctional Officer calls in sick, takes vacation, or has a family emergency his/her position must be filled. Another Correctional Officer is required to work that position, because in the prison system, a posted position cannot be vacant. Again due to Court ordered and Legislative mandates inmate programs must continue regardless of Staffing issues; therefore, overtime becomes the primary solution to ensuring the safe and secure operation of any 24 hour institution, such as State hospitals or State prisons.

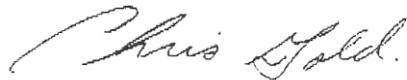
Due to the fact that a "posted" position cannot be vacant a procedure called "**FORCED OVERTIME**" is used on a daily basis to ensure the safety and security of the inmates, the institution, and assigned staffed. Forced overtime gives affected staff no options as to whether you would "like" the overtime or not. You are "directed" to stay overtime to cover a shift/post. In this case staff is not "volunteering" to take that next 8-hour shift. Imagine yourself getting ready to go home to your family, maybe your son or daughter has a sporting event, or it is an anniversary, or after a long work day you are excited to get home for Christmas with your children, unexpectedly you are "ordered" or "directed", to work another shift. Again, no amount of money in the world can ever replace missing those precious moments with your family, that now you have to miss.

Our great State and Country are facing difficult times, and we in the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation staff are a part of this community. We truly can see firsthand the affects on our State and our Beautiful Country as it relates to the economy. We are not

holding our hands out asking for more money; yet, we are asking that the News media not misrepresent dedicated State employees. We are also requesting that the News media cease the deluge of misinformation concerning the compensation and benefits that we truly work hard for on a daily basis. As State employees we seem to be first targets when "Government" deems that budget cuts are necessary and when the News media needs a "story". Remember the compensation that we receive, as State employees was approved, signed, and endorsed by past Governors and Legislators.

There are other solutions, let us continue to work together in finding those solutions.

Respectfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Gold".

Chris Gold, Correctional Lieutenant  
CCSO State Board Member