

May 23, 2006



The Honorable Christine Gregoire
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire:

I am writing to express my concerns about the chaplain cuts within the Department of Corrections (DOC) in response to your effort to eliminate 1,000 management positions. As you know, the DOC plans to cut eight chaplain positions which will result in having only one chaplain at most of the state prisons.

Faith and religion play an important role in the rehabilitation of many offenders. Faith helps inmates accept responsibility for their actions and change the negative lifestyles and bad habits that resulted in their incarceration. Chaplains play a key role in facilitating that process and are central to the overall operation of the prison. They serve as a calming force, a stress reducer and their mere presence often diffuse potentially volatile situations.

Chaplains also play a critical role in preparing offenders for reentry into society. As you know, the vast majority of those who are incarcerated will eventually be released back into the community and without the proper reentry skills and support network—the offender is likely to recidivate, resulting in more victimization and higher criminal justice costs for the state.

Governor, as a person of faith I feel strongly that every effort should be made to preserve these important positions. I have always been someone that you can work with and I would like to work with you to preserve these positions or find alternatives so that the chaplain program is not adversely impacted.

I thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Al O'Brien
First Legislative District