



# Capitol Confidential

A behind-the-scenes look at New York politics.

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## [Tomorrow: rallies for stepped-up prison closures \(updated\)](#)

Friday, May 14, 2010 at 12:27 PM by [Casey Seiler](#) in [Prisons](#)

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The coalition that pushed for last year's reforms to the Rockefeller Drug Laws are planning events tomorrow to advocate for more prison closures — a move that they argue would “save money, further reduce crime, and build healthy communities.” The group will be registering voters and gathering signatures for a petition.

The demonstrations will be held downstate, with the exception of one in Hudson; legislators scheduled to appear include Sen. Bill Perkins and Assembly members Michelle Titus, Inez Barron and Felix Ortiz.

**Update:** Bob Gangi of the state Correctional Association called to say that an Albany event would be held at “the barbershop at the corner of Orange and Lexington” from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday.

Read the release after the jump.

New York is facing a budget deficit of over \$9 billion this year. Governor Paterson has proposed severe reductions to services like education and healthcare. Meanwhile, the state is wasting millions of dollars on failed incarceration policies and empty prison beds. In fact, in the last 10 years New York's prison population has declined by 14,000 people, and the crime rate has dropped by over 28%. To save money, further reduce crime, and build healthy communities, state leaders should enact constructive criminal justice reforms, including the expansion of work release, the full repeal of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, and the closure of underutilized prisons.

“We look to the governor and the legislature to exercise leadership aimed at reducing our prison population and saving the state money, while investing in approaches that cut recidivism rates and restore the well-being of our people and communities,” says Robert Gangi, Executive Director of the Correctional Association of NY. “Our question to state policymakers is simple: At a time when city government is planning to lay off over 6,000 teachers to cut costs, how can you overlook the hundreds of millions of dollars in savings achievable by closing empty prisons?”

“Crime has dropped dramatically in the past 10 years, and the prison population has declined by 14,000 people,” states Drop the Rock Campaign Coordinator Caitlin Dunklee. “Empowerment Day has taken root across the state in communities which have been most negatively affected by the state's imprisonment policies. Leaders in these areas agree that NY can no longer base the economies of rural districts on the warehousing of low-income people of color.”

“New Yorkers need to know that the Governor's proposal to close prisons does not go nearly far enough,” explains Empowerment Day organizer and Drop the Rock Associate Denise Thomas. “Over 5,000 prison beds will remain empty across the state. Drop the Rock wants to know why the Governor is willing to take extreme measures like cutting funds for proven alternative to incarceration programs and enforcing furloughs on government employees to tighten the state budget deficit but is unwilling to close underutilized prisons.”