

10 Ways in 10 Days

Way 6

10 ways budget cuts will hurt working New Mexicans



The Cut: Governor Martinez has proposed an overall cut of \$1.6 million for the state Department of Corrections. Past cuts have already meant serious staff shortages and the elimination of effective prevention programs.

The Consequences: The Corrections Department has a high turn-over rate. Last year's hiring freeze has meant that essential job functions are not being performed. One such vacancy at the state penitentiary is the officer at the traffic post, which is a facility's first line of defense. It helps to minimize the amount of contraband that is brought into a secure facility.

Earlier this year, a prevention program called Impact was eliminated to save Corrections just \$450,000. Nearly half of all people who serve time in prison end up back behind bars, but just 6 percent of Impact participants re-offend, according to PB&J—the nonprofit group that ran the program.

Impact helped prepare prisoners for life on the “outside,” and helped them find jobs and places to live. What's more, the program worked with the children of inmates, who are at a much higher risk of getting into trouble with the law than children whose parents have not been incarcerated. As one Impact graduate told a local newspaper, “they fill that void, that gap, of support you don't have when you get out.”

Staff shortages at corrections facilities compromise safety and increase turn-over rates. These both end up costing more money in the long-term, as does the elimination of successful prevention programs such as Impact. Small short-term savings simply aren't worth it.

A Better Choice: Governor Martinez and the Legislature need to take a balanced approach to addressing our state's revenue crisis. They should:

- Get rid of tax giveaways that do not create jobs.
- Ensure that profitable corporations and the rich pay their fair share.
- Make big out-of-state corporations and banks play by the same rules as our home-grown businesses.
- Make our system of tax breaks more transparent and accountable.

It's only fair that we stand up for New Mexico families and small businesses.

Urge our politicians to make the *Better Choice for New Mexico*.

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