

MESSAGE ID: SYMSG 0000 SUBJECT: LAC "SURVEY"
FROM USERID: SYMSG CREATED: 06/17/08 DELETE DATE: 07/02/08
FROM USER.: WARD, JOHN R

FROM: JON OZMINT TO: ALL SCDC EMPLOYEES
I ENCOURAGE ALL OF YOU TO READ OUR AGENCY NEWSLETTER EACH MONTH THAT IT IS PUBLISHED. THIS MONTH, IT OFFERS MY ASSESSMENT OF OUR STATE BUDGETING PROCESS THAT FAILED THIS AGENCY'S EMPLOYEES ONCE AGAIN. IN THAT NEWSLETTER, I ALSO NOTE THE CONTINUING EFFORTS OF A FEW IN THE LEGISLATURE TO DISCREDIT THIS AGENCY VIA THEIR LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COUNCIL. THOSE EFFORTS BRING TO MIND TWO CHARACTER TRAITS: DISCERNMENT - UNDERSTANDING THE TRUE MOTIVATIONS OF OTHERS; AND, SENSITIVITY - PERCEIVING THE TRUE ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS OF OTHERS.

EARLIER TODAY, YOU RECEIVED AN EMAIL FROM THE LAC, ON SCDC'S COMPUTER SYSTEM. LATE THIS WEEK OR EARLY NEXT WEEK, OVER 1000 OF OUR EMPLOYEES WILL RECEIVE A QUESTIONNAIRE PURPORTING TO SEEK AN HONEST APPRAISAL OF "WORKING CONDITIONS" AT SCDC. OUT OF 50 QUESTIONS, NOT A SINGLE QUESTION EVEN ADDRESSES THE SINGLE LARGEST ISSUE FACING THIS AGENCY OVER THE PAST 8 YEARS: LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED BUDGET/STAFFING CUTS AND INCREASING INMATE POPULATIONS.

IT IS EASY AND TEMPTING TO BLAME YOUR IMMEDIATE SUPERIORS, YOUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP OR THIS AGENCY FOR LOW PAY, LOW STAFFING, CROWDED PRISONS AND INSUFFICIENT EQUIPMENT. HOWEVER, ALL OF THOSE PROBLEMS ARE CONTROLLED BY LAWMAKERS. HERE ARE A FEW OF THE PROBLEMS WITH THE LAC "SURVEY".

THE SURVEY MAKES NO EFFORT TO SEEK COMPARISONS OR ESTABLISH OR REFERENCE ANY BASELINE. IT HAS NEVER BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO OTHER AGENCIES AND IT HAS NEVER BEEN USED BEFORE IN THIS AGENCY: THERE IS NO RELEVANT REFERENCE FOR COMPARISON. AND, THE SURVEY EVEN REFUSES TO ALLOW RESPONDENTS TO MAKE ANY COMPARISON ABOUT THE AGENCY NOW AS OPPOSED TO ANY OTHER POINT IN TIME: TWO, FIVE, OR TEN YEARS AGO.

THIS SURVEY MAKES NO MENTION OR ALLOWANCE FOR THE NATURE OF WORKING IN A ANY CORRECTIONAL SETTING: SETTINGS THAT ARE GENERALLY DEMANDING, STRESSFUL AND DANGEROUS IN COMPARISON TO OTHER WORK ENVIRONMENTS. WHILE IT PRETENDS TO SEEK INFORMATION ABOUT OUR WORK ENVIRONMENT, THE SURVEY ONLY ALLOWS FOR RESPONSES ABOUT SCDC MANAGEMENT AND SCDC SUPERVISORS. HOWEVER, THIS IS EVEN MORE DISINGENUOUS SINCE THE SURVEY CONVENIENTLY NEGLECTS TO ASK EVEN A SINGLE QUESTION ABOUT HOW DECISIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AFFECT THE SCDC WORK-PLACE. IN A LEGISLATIVELY DOMINATED STATE, THIS OMISSION ALONE IS FATAL TO ANY HONEST ASSESSMENT OF WORK ENVIRONMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, OUR LOWEST IN THE NATION FUNDING AND STAFFING ARE DIRECTLY CONTROLLED BY THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH. SCDC SALARIES ARE LOWER THAN THOSE OF OTHER CORRECTIONAL SYSTEMS AND LOWER THAN MOST OF OUR STATE AGENCIES. THOSE ARE DIRECTLY CONTROLLED BY THE LEGISLATURE. YET, THERE IS NOT A SINGLE QUESTION ABOUT THE IMPACT OF LEGISLATIVE DECISIONS ON ENVIRONMENT. AND, NO EFFORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THAT EMPLOYEES DISSATISFACTION WITH LEGISLATIVELY CONTROLLED ISSUES DOES NOT SPILL OVER INTO COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. IN FACT, THIS SURVEY INVITES THAT PRECISE RESULT.

A CLASIC EXAMPLE CONCERNS THE QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN SCDC. AFTER DECADES OF FUNDING THAT RANKED AMONG THE LOWEST FIVE STATES IN THE NATION, THEY EVENTUALLY CUT OUR BUDGET TO THE VERY BOTTOM IN THE NATION. TO OPERATE EVEN CLOSE TO THOSE LIMITS, WE HAVE BEEN FORCED TO STOP PRINTING OUR EMPLOYEE

NEWSLETTER. THE LEGISLATURE HAS REPEATEDLY REFUSED TO FUND OUR REQUESTS FOR MODERN COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AND A MODERN COMPUTER SYSTEM. THEN, HAVING DENIED US THE TOOLS TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITHIN AN AGENCY SPREAD ACROSS 28 INSTITUTIONS AND SIX SHIFTS, THE LEGISLATURE NOW INVITES CRITICISM OF OUR COMMUNICATIONS!

BY PASSING NEW LAWS, EACH YEAR THE LEGISLATURE ADDS MORE INMATES TO OUR POPULATION, YET THEY REFUSE TO FUND NEW PRISONS OR TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT VEHICLES. THE SURVEY INCLUDES NO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF OVER-CROWDED PRISONS AND FEWER STAFF AND SUPERVISORS ON THE WORK ENVIRONMENT! WE USE HAND-ME-DOWN BULLET PROOF VESTS FOR OUR TRANSPORT OFFICERS AND OUR VEHICLES EXCEED THOSE OF ANY OTHER STATE AGENCY IN MILEAGE AND AGE. OUR INSTITUTIONAL EMPLOYEES WORK WITH OUTDATED RADIOS AND WITHOUT BODY ALARMS, BODY ARMOR, OR CAMERAS IN THEIR HOUSING UNITS. AMAZINGLY THIS SURVEY PRESUMES THAT THOSE FACTORS DO NOT AFFECT THE "WORK ENVIRONMENT". BY INVITING CRITICISM BROADLY, WITHOUT SPECIFYING ACTUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BY FAILING TO OFFER ANY POINTS FOR COMPARISON, THE SURVEY WILL PROVIDE NO USEFUL INFORMATION BUT IT WILL PROVIDE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR STAFF TO CRITICIZE SUPERIORS AND THE AGENCY FOR THINGS THAT ARE ACTUALLY OUTSIDE OF THEIR CONTROL; USING THIS SURVEY ANY RESPONDENT DISSATISFIED WITH STAFFING LEVELS, SALARIES, INSURANCE COSTS, BENEFITS OR OLD AND INADEQUATE SAFETY EQUIPMENT WILL EXPRESS THAT SENTIMENT BY CRITICIZING SUPERVISORS WITHIN SCDC! NOT EXACTLY AN HONEST INSTRUMENT, BUT CERTAINLY CONSISTENT THROUGHOUT.

ALL IN ALL, THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH HAS REDUCED THE FUNDING OF SCDC TO RECORD LOW LEVELS; THEY HAVE FORCED OUR EMPLOYEES TO MANAGE LEVELS OF RISK THAT ARE HIGHER THAN THOSE MANAGED BY THEIR PEERS IN ANY OTHER STATE; BY CUTTING STAFFING AFTER PASSING TRUTH-IN-SENTENCING, THEY HAVE FORCED SCDC EMPLOYEES TO SUPERVISE MORE DANGEROUS INMATES; THEY HAVE FORCED SCDC EMPLOYEES TO DO MORE WORK FOR LESS MONEY THAN ANY GROUP OF CORRECTIONAL PROFESSIONALS IN THE NATION; THEY HAVE REFUSED TO MAINTAIN INFRASTRUCTURE; THEY HAVE REFUSED TO PAY FOR PERSONAL SAFETY EQUIPMENT, CAMERAS AND ADDITIONAL STAFF; THEY HAVE REFUSED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE PAY RAISES AND INCENTIVE PAY; THEY HAVE REFUSED TO FUND FOOD AND MEDICAL CARE FOR INMATES; THEY HAVE REFUSED TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR ADEQUATE UNIFORM REPLACEMENT CYCLES FOR SECURITY STAFF; AND THEY HAVE RAISED THE COST OF BENEFITS SUCH AS HEALTH CARE PREMIUMS; AND, IN THE MONTHS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THIS SURVEY, THEY WILL HAVE PASSED A BUDGET THAT EFFECTIVELY CUTS EMPLOYEE WAGES BY PASSING A COST OF LIVING INCREASE THAT FAILS TO APPROACH THE RATE OF INFLATION!

NOW, AFTER YEARS OF NEGLECT THAT HAVE CREATED THE MOST SPARTAN WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE NATION, IN A YEAR WHERE WE ARE "FROZEN" BECAUSE OF LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED DEFICITS, AND IN A YEAR WHERE EMPLOYEE PAY AND BENEFITS WILL FALL FURTHER BEHIND THE COST OF LIVING, THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH PUTS FORTH A QUESTIONNAIRE THAT MAKES NO MENTION OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, THEREBY FORCING EMPLOYEES TO BLAME THEIR INSTITUTIONAL AND AGENCY LEADERSHIP FOR ANY DISSATISFACTION! AGAIN, THIS MAY SERVE A POLITICAL AGENDA OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COUNCIL, BUT IT WILL NEVER BE VIEWED AS A FAIR AND ACCURATE ASSESSMENT OR AN ATTEMPT TO GATHER USEFUL INFORMATION.

IN THIS WORLD OF PUSH-POLLING AND HIDDEN POLITICAL AGENDA'S, DISCERNMENT AND SENSITIVITY ARE CRITICAL CHARACTER TRAITS. IT IS ALWAYS EASY AND TEMPTING TO BLAME THIS AGENCY FOR THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY YEARS OF LEGISLATIVE NEGLECT. I SENT A LETTER TO THE LAC VOICING THESE AND OTHER OBJECTIONS. I ALSO REQUESTED THAT A FAIR AND MEANINGFUL SURVEY BE DEVELOPED FOR USE IN A CORRECTIONAL SETTING. MY REQUEST WAS REJECTED.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO ANSWER THE SURVEY, DO SO HONESTLY. HAVE A GREAT WEEK.