

# The MASCA Connection

President's Corner



President Henry Alexander

Welcome to the first issue of the return of the MASCA Connection. Our goal is to provide members with news from around the MASCA region, information about events that may interest members, MASCA news, and other fun and interesting articles. Our first edition contains news from all seven MASCA member states (including the District of Columbia). In future editions, you will see news about the 2012 MASCA Conference, special events in the region, and updates on what your MASCA Board of Trustees has been doing.

We want to make the MASCA Connection relevant and informative for MASCA members. Please feel free to send us your feedback, suggestions, and especially newsworthy information about your agency or happenings in your area.

Again, welcome to the "Connection" and happy reading.

Henry

Henry Alexander

President

Middle Atlantic States Correctional Association

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## Connecticut—News Reporter Needed

## Get Involved—MASCA Committees

The Middle Atlantic States Correctional Association (MASCA) is looking for talented members to come out and share their knowledge and skills by volunteering to participate on one or more of our committees. For more information, contact a committee chair via e-mail.

### Finance & Audit Committee

Chair: Sean Ryan  
srryan@co.bucks.pa.us

### Membership Committee

Chair: LaVonya Douglas  
Lavonya.Douglas@csosa.gov

### Policy & Procedure Committee

Chair: Marigold Henderson  
Marigold.Henderson@csosa.gov

### Publications & Communications

Chair: Dawn Pearson  
dawn.pearsons@gmail.com

## Delaware



## SCCC Staff and Offenders Harvest Honey from Facility's Apiary

The small five-hive apiary maintained at the Sussex Community Corrections Center (SCCC) in Georgetown has done an excellent job of keeping bees on site to increase crop production at the facility's farm, but it has also yielded an additional bonus – a quantity of honey sufficient enough to require harvesting. Having to make the harvest was not a surprise, but the need arose earlier than expected, which prompted staff and offenders to make some quick adjustments that kept them as busy as, well, bees for several days earlier this month.

“We were reaching a point where a large number of bees were going to leave the apiary because of a lack of space in the hives brought on by the significant amount of honey that had been produced,” said Cpl. Sandy Dale, who oversees the bee program at SCCC. “With bees playing such an important role in crop pollination, we needed to remove some of the honey to keep the bees around our farm.”

The harvest took place in late June, with Cpl. Dale and Sgt. James Larsen donning protective beekeeper suits to remove the frames of honeycomb from the hives and female offenders from the facility refining the honey.

The offenders uncapped the honeycomb and placed the frames in a honey extractor, which removed the honey but maintained the structure of the comb so it could be returned to the hives. The honey was then passed through three sieves before it was sealed into jars. The process yielded 211 pounds

of honey.

“Our ultimate goal is to provide the honey for use within Department of Correction kitchens, as it is an all-natural, protein-rich sweetener that works well within our heart-healthy menu plan,” stated SCCC Warden Bill Oettel, noting the honey would especially be useful during the period of Ramadan. “But until those arrangements can be properly worked out, we will provide the jars of honey to local churches and charitable organizations and use them as gifts of appreciation to staff members and dignitaries.”

An additional harvest will most likely take place in August, but enough honey will be left in the hives to help the bees sustain the fall and winter months.

<http://doc.delaware.gov/news/11press0629.pdf>





## MAYOR GRAY, CHIEF JUDGE SATTERFIELD ANNOUNCE DC SAFE SURRENDER 2011

WASHINGTON, DC – Mayor Vincent C. Gray, Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, Public Defender Service Director Avis Buchanan, Pastor Apostle James Silver and 2007 Safe Surrender participant Willie Jones spoke at the Safe Surrender press conference in front of the Moultrie Courthouse. Also joining them on the podium were Police Chief Cathy Lanier, Acting U.S. Marshal Thomas Hedgepeth, and U.S. Attorney Robert C. Machen, Jr. The DC Safe Surrender program is an opportunity for persons who have outstanding bench warrants for non-violent felonies or misdemeanors in D.C. to surrender voluntarily at the Moultrie Courthouse. DC Safe Surrender recognizes that many persons have bench warrants because they failed to appear for a court hearing or violated conditions of probation or parole, and they now want to resolve the matter and move forward with their lives. The program's goal is to reduce the number of outstanding bench warrants. The program provides persons with a way to turn themselves in, without the risk of being arrested at home, in front of their family and children, or during a routine traffic stop. Over 500 people turned themselves in

during a similar program in 2007, with all but 10 going home that same day.

“Providing for safe communities is one of my administration's top priorities, and the Safe Surrender program helps make the District of Columbia safer by encouraging those wanted for non-violent crimes to do the right thing,” said Mayor Gray. “It represents a win-win proposal for our justice system and for the accused.”

“DC Safe Surrender is an initiative focused on increasing public safety, and we hope to build on the success of the 2007 program,” Chief Judge Satterfield said. “By taking responsibility for their actions, participants of Safe Surrender can show their friends, family, and the judge, that they are taking the appropriate steps towards becoming responsible members of the community. I encourage everyone with an outstanding bench warrant to turn themselves in.”

The DC Safe Surrender program will take place on three consecutive Saturdays, **August 13, August 20, and August 27, 2011** from **9:30am-4:30pm**. For more information, including a list of those with bench warrants eligible for the program, please

visit

[www.dcsafesurrender.org](http://www.dcsafesurrender.org)

*Safe Surrender is a partnership between: the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, DC Public Defender Service, DC Superior Court, Deputy Mayor's Office for Public Safety and Justice, Metropolitan Police Department, Office of Attorney General, Pretrial Services Agency, US Attorney's Office, and US Marshals Service.*

<http://mayor.dc.gov/DC/Mayor/About+the+Mayor/News+Room/ci.Mayor+Vincent+C.+Gray+and+Chief+Judge+Lee+Satterfield+Announce+D.C.+Safe+Surrender+Program+For+2011.print>

# In Loving Memory

## Carl Raymond Williams, Sr.

### February 22, 1957- August 26, 2011

### Middletown, NY

Carl R. Williams, Sr., Supervising Senior Counselor of Eastern Correctional Facility in Ellenville, died unexpectedly on Saturday, August 26, 2011 at O.R.M.C. in Middletown. He was 54. He was born on February 22, 1957 in the Bronx, the son of the late Janet Felix Williams and Joseph Williams, Sr. He grew up in the Bronx, and on June 11, 1988, he married Phyllis Smith in N.Y.C. Carl and Phyllis brought their family to the Middletown area in 1993. He was a deeply spiritual man who was a dedicated member and usher at St. Joseph's R.C. Church in Middletown. Carl was also 4th degree Knight and past faithful navigator of the Knights of Columbus. He will be remembered as a gentleman who always treated others with care and respect. He was extremely outgoing with a wonderful sense of humor. He loved his family dearly and was always smiling. Carl is survived by his loving family; his beloved wife Phyllis; children, Lanette, Phylcia, Carl R. Williams Jr., Sean and Janet Williams all at home. He also leaves his brothers, Joseph Jr of TN, Kevin of Brooklyn, Darryl of the Bronx, Mark of VA, and Gerald of LI; one sister, Janice Ross of NJ, many nephews, nieces and friends.

Carl Williams was a MASCA Board Member for 2 years and Registration Chair for MASCA's 2011 Conference.

## 2011 MASCA Conference

MASCA had a great 2011 Conference in Albany. The workshops were on target with those in attendance and the speakers challenged us to look deeper into why our offenders behave as they do and get below the instant offense that bring them to us. MASCA again awarded two \$1000.00 Dennis R. Martin Memorial Scholarships to two deserving college students and we added a scholarship to pay the tuition for a member to attend the APPA Leadership Institute. We also raised \$1000.00 to donate to Peter Young Housing, Industries, and Treatment in Albany, NY. Added a fun-filled night at Jillian's and a Hudson River Cruise and the Albany Conference covered all of the bases.

We will be continuing to work on our strategic plan, setting budgets, planning conferences, and recruiting members

## Polar Bear Plunge

The 16th Annual Maryland State Police—Polar Bear Plunge will be held on Saturday, January 28, 2012. Come out and join the MASCA Blue Gills for a dip in the Chesapeake Bay.



For more information, visit:

<http://plunge2012.kintera.org/faf/login/teamPageEdit.asp?ievent=484131&lis=0&kntae484131=3D43D34AB89E49C9B2FAA4A07FE4708E&page=view>

## Upcoming Events

**Probation Association of New Jersey 69th Annual Training Institute**  
Atlantic City, New Jersey  
November 20–22, 2011

**American Correctional Association's 2012 Winter Conference**  
Phoenix, Arizona  
January 20 – 25, 2012

**American Probation & Parole Assoc. 2012 Winter Training Institute**  
San Diego, CA  
February 26–29, 2012

**American Jail Association's 31st Annual Training Conference & Jail Expo!**  
Reno, Nevada  
April 22–26, 2012

**2012 MASCA /PAPPC Conference**  
Hershey, Pennsylvania  
June 17–20, 2012

**Association of Women Executives in Corrections (2012) Annual Membership Training Institute**  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
September 14 – 16, 2012

## New Jersey



## Correction Officers Graduation October 21

The Atlantic County Police Training Center will hold graduation ceremonies for 17 members of class #21 who recently completed the 11-week basic course for correction officers. Graduation will take place on Friday, October 21 at 3 PM at the Fernwood Avenue Middle School, 4034 Fernwood Avenue, Egg Harbor Township.

The graduating class includes 12 officers assigned to the Atlantic County Department of Public Safety: Francis Battaglia, Egg Harbor Township; Louis Charlton, Williamstown; Giovanni Garcia, Mays Landing; Juan Gil-Rodriguez, Pleasantville; Marion Hernandez-Portillo, Egg Harbor Township; Scott Hewitt-Shiley, Egg Harbor Township; Brian Kinch, Egg Harbor Township; Damian Martinez, Vineland; Manuel Montoya, Mays Landing; Arthur Paduani, Egg Harbor City; Freddie Sykes, Newtonville; and Abel Vargas, Mays Landing. Officers Christine Baker, Millville and Cynthia Reid, Bridgeton are assigned to the Cumberland County Department of Corrections. Additionally, three officers are assigned to the Salem County Sheriff's Department:

Nash Hetzell, Pittsgrove; Elbert Johnson, II, Norma; and Mark Nelson, Pennsville.

[http://www.aclink.org/AdminServ/press/mainpages/pr\\_detail.asp?ID=2388](http://www.aclink.org/AdminServ/press/mainpages/pr_detail.asp?ID=2388)

## Pennsylvania



# Bucks County has new director of corrections

August 18, 2011 | By Larry King, Inquirer Staff Writer

A longtime supervisor in New Jersey's state prison and criminal rehabilitative programs has been named Bucks County's new director of corrections.

William Plantier, 60, of Burlington Township, succeeds county prisons chief Harris Gubernick, who retired Feb. 2 after nine years in the post. County commissioners on Wednesday unanimously approved Plantier for the \$107,000-per-year job.

"I really liked what I saw," Plantier said Wednesday. "I was more than pleased with the caliber of people I would be working with, and I liked the facilities. They are a little bit crowded, just like everybody's are, but I thought they were well-operated."

Plantier has spent most of his 38-year career around prisons and criminals, and also has dealt extensively with diagnostic and treatment services for those preparing to reenter society. Beginning in 1973, he

worked almost three decades in various jobs at New Jersey's Adult Diagnostic and Treatment Center, which serves convicted sex offenders. He was the center's administrator throughout the 1990s.

From 2000 through 2007, Plantier served as director of the division of operations for New Jersey's Department of Corrections.

He currently works for a nonprofit that serves developmentally disabled offenders.

Plantier's experience with community treatment options is "a great thing, especially as we need to get the overcrowding out of our prison system," County Commissioner Diane Ellis-Marseglia said.

Commissioner Robert Loughery called Plantier "a good fit," saying overcrowding "was an issue that we discussed, along with treatment - mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues - how do we handle them?"

Plantier will oversee not only Bucks County's main prison, but also its men's and women's community corrections centers for more minor offenders. Combined, they house more than 1,000 prisoners. About 200 other people are on house arrest.

Gubernick called the job "a pivotal position," one

that will challenge Plantier to work "with other agencies, the courts, and the criminal justice system to reduce its own population."

[http://www.philly.com/philly/news/pennsylvania/20110818\\_Bucks\\_County\\_has\\_new\\_director\\_of\\_corrections.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/news/pennsylvania/20110818_Bucks_County_has_new_director_of_corrections.html)

**"William Plantier, 60, of Burlington Township, succeeds county prisons chief Harris Gubernick, who retired Feb. 2 after nine years"**

## New York



### Governor Cuomo Announces Closure of Seven State Prison Facilities

*Action fulfills Governor's pledge to make appropriate changes based on declining inmate population and provides \$184 million in savings to state taxpayers over next two years*

Albany, NY (June 30, 2011) Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced he will close seven New York state prisons, fulfilling his pledge to consolidate the state's correctional facilities based on a declining inmate population and providing significant savings to New York state taxpayers.

Communities affected by the closures will be able to request economic development assistance from the state, which includes money from a \$50 million fund as well as additional tax credits available to help end the reliance on prisons as a major source of employment and economic sustainability.

The state's closure plan includes four male minimum security facilities: Buffalo Work Release (Erie County), Camp Georgetown (Madison County), Summit Shock (Schoharie County) and Fulton Work Release (Bronx County); and three male medium security facilities: Arthur Kill (Richmond County), Mid-Orange (Orange County) and Oneida (Oneida County).

Approximately 3,800 unneeded and unused beds will be eliminated, saving taxpayers \$72 million in 2011-12 and \$112 million in 2012-13. The offenders in these facilities will be moved to other prisons that have available space with no interruption. No maximum security facilities will close under this plan.

"The state's prison system has been too inefficient and too costly with far more capacity than what is needed to secure the state's inmate population and ensure the public's safety," Governor Cuomo said. "This plan is the result of very careful and

detailed analysis and deliberation. It succeeds in targeting facilities for closure without compromising public safety and will save taxpayers \$184 million. We will work closely to ensure impacted areas are given substantial state aid to help them create jobs and transform their local economies. New York will continue to keep the highest standard of public safety and maintain one of the safest correctional systems in the country."

"The plan for prison closures in New York state reflects the state's changing and declining inmate population, while recognizing the benefit of programs that provide alternatives to incarceration and supervised re-entry into society," DOCCS Commissioner Brian Fischer said. "By closing facilities, removing excess capacity and focusing on the core programs that will continue to rehabilitate offenders, DOCCS will provide the highest level of security to protect the public with greater efficiency and cost effectiveness."

Since 1999, New York's prison population has declined by 22 percent, from a high of 71,600 offenders incarcerated 12 years ago to approximately 56,000 today. The continuing downward trend of the state's prison population is largely attributed to the simultaneous drop in crime across the state. Over the past ten years, the overall rate of crime in New York has declined by 25 percent and the number of major crimes (e.g., homicide; assault) has declined by 23 percent.

From 2001 to 2010, the number of inmates housed at maximum security prisons declined by 2 percent (from 25,331 in 2001, to 24,822 in 2010), the number of inmates at medium security prisons decreased by 19.5 percent (from 35,763 in 2001, to 28,795 in 2010) and the number at minimum security facilities dropped by 57.2 percent (from 6,301 in 2001, to 2,698 in 2010).

Since the late 1980s, the State Legislature enacted several laws that offer mostly non-violent offenders early release as an incentive for good behavior and program achievements, including the Shock Incarceration, Work Release, Comprehensive Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment (CASAT), Willard Drug

Treatment Campus, Merit Time and Limited Credit Time Allowance programs.

The 1973 Rockefeller Drug Laws have been reformed three times to allow many drug offenders to apply to have their sentences reduced, to allow some to earn extra time off their fixed minimum period of indeterminate sentences for good behavior and achievement of milestones involving treatment, educational, training and work programs, and, last year, to divert more new offenders into alternatives to incarceration.

These changes have already led to the early release of many offenders, virtually all of them non-violent drug offenders, on average eight months earlier than had the laws remain unchanged, resulting in the need for fewer prison beds.

Earlier this year, Governor Cuomo achieved the merger of the former Department of Correctional Services and Division of Parole into the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS). It is estimated that newly merged state agency will save state taxpayers \$17 million in the current 2011-12 fiscal year.

<http://www.governor.ny.gov/press/06302011ClosureOfSevenStatePrisonFacilities>

## Maryland

### Governor O'Malley, Governor Markell Announce New Information Sharing Initiative

**Salisbury, MD (August 18, 2011)** - Governor Martin O'Malley and Delaware Governor Jack Markell today launched an important new effort by both states to collaborate and share information across jurisdictional boundaries about violent or potentially violent offenders. Details of the new initiative were announced at a meeting today on the campus of Salisbury University.

"In our continued effort to make Maryland a national leader in public safety and homeland security preparedness, we support effective communication and information sharing across all levels of government and state borders," said Governor O'Malley. "The most important responsibilities we have in government are to create jobs and protect the public's safety. Working together with our partners across the State, we have driven violent crime and property crime rates down to their lowest levels in recorded history. By reaching beyond our borders, using innovative technology and sharing information, we will continue to drive the levels down even further."

"Criminals and crime have no boundaries," said Delaware Governor Jack Markell. "It's our responsibility to work together across state

lines and share information that can benefit citizens of both states, especially as technology allows us to know more and do more. By working collaboratively and using our collective knowledge, we serve everyone by making our streets and our communities safer."

Delaware Governor Markell and key Delaware officials, including Elizabeth Olsen, Deputy Secretary of the Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security; Colonel Robert M. Coupe, Superintendent of the Delaware State Police; and Alan Grinstead, Deputy Bureau Chief of Delaware Community Corrections, joined their counterparts from Maryland for the meeting that included Gary Maynard, Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Colonel Marcus Brown, Superintendent of the Maryland State Police; and Sam Abed, Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Services.

The new strategic partnership will allow parole and probation officials and law enforcement in both states to exchange information with one another on arrests, enabling the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation to take appropriate action if a suspect from Maryland violates the terms of release while in Delaware. Additionally, law enforcement and public safety officials in both states will be able to prioritize warrant service. Between January and June of this year, there were 389 people wanted in Delaware with Maryland addresses and just over 1000 people arrested in Delaware that had Maryland addresses. Additionally, in the past year, 22 youths from Delaware had contact with the Maryland Department of Juvenile

Services. With this shared information, the Maryland State Police and local police will be able to move more effectively to get the most dangerous suspects off the streets and better track youth currently monitored by the Department of Juvenile Services. These initial steps could lead to other information-sharing opportunities including information from license plate readers to track stolen or suspicious vehicles and pawn shop databases to locate stolen property.

The new Maryland-Delaware effort is similar to the Safe Streets Program operating in Maryland and Delaware. Safe Streets programs have been launched in Salisbury, Annapolis and Wilmington. Safe Streets allows law enforcement officials to share data and hold offenders accountable for their actions through a cooperative effort of law enforcement at the federal, state, county and local level. Safe Streets uses an innovative security integration model of multi-agency collaboration with federal, state, local law enforcement, public safety agencies, and community partners to aggressively track offenders to reduce drug, gun, and other major crimes. Through a combination of improved police tactics and practices, modern and enhanced technology, and the integration of expanded community partnerships, the initiative has taken significant steps to reduce crime and promote safer neighborhoods and communities.

[http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/publicinfo/news\\_stories/press\\_releases/20110818a.shtml](http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/publicinfo/news_stories/press_releases/20110818a.shtml)





# MASCA WORD SEARCH

H D N E W Y O R K W D P N L O S G X D A  
 O A M U N T W S E A I X A M B M P W W I  
 T S J I U Y F A Q S S A E M D Y N J R N  
 T S W G E R P G I T T U Y G T X H Q C A  
 G O A B W A H K D A R L W U R M T E K V  
 K C C E G T V O N T I I P W Z X N X O L  
 G I Q J C E D A I E C T W I Y O E R Q Y  
 A A I P H R W Y Z S T F H R T C D J T S  
 I T M G C C Q E U L O I B H N O I Q U N  
 F I W R G E H S X R F B C C E R S I G N  
 Y O J L Q S S R G U C X M O D R E K I E  
 O N W Y O S Y E Q D O L I N I E R C E P  
 L M E X Y D M J B L L E D N S C P I O O  
 C C J H E K B W C U U H D E E T I T Z W  
 M I K P M A D E I J M V L C R I O N P P  
 E V P L S X U N K Y B D E T P O L A J U  
 U S N Q O V U F X K I Q B I E N T L C T  
 G F D N A L Y R A M A U Q C C A D T R J  
 F U Y M U A R I G J F F Z U I L A A K F  
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|----------------------|----------------|
| Association          | New Jersey     |
| Atlantic             | New York       |
| Connecticut          | Pennsylvania   |
| Correctional         | President      |
| Delaware             | Secretary      |
| District of Columbia | States         |
| Maryland             | Vice President |
| Middle               |                |

## CONTACT US

Contact us at: [MASCA@correctionsmail.com](mailto:MASCA@correctionsmail.com)

Visit us on the web at: [www.masca.corrections.com](http://www.masca.corrections.com)

Apply for our MASCA Scholarship by May 1, 2012. To apply visit us at: [MASCA Scholarship](#).



## MIDDLE ATLANTIC STATES CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION

Connecticut · Delaware · District of Columbia · Maryland · New Jersey · New York · Pennsylvania

### MEMBERSHIP NEWS MASCA GOES ELECTRONIC! By Henry Alexander, MASCA President

There used to be only two options for joining MASCA or renewing your membership. One was to attend a MASCA Conference in June each year. The other was to fill out a membership application and mail it to us with a check for \$20.00. You can now join MASCA or renew your membership electronically with a credit card through the MASCA Membership Renewal Website. **To introduce this new service MASCA is offering a special membership rate.** If you did not attend the 2011 MASCA Conference in Albany or mail in a renewal, you can join or renew for the rest of the 2011/2012 business year for only \$15.00! This offer is good until December 1, 2011. After that date the regular rate of \$20.00 applies. You can go directly to our electronic membership screen by clicking ["Register Here"](#) and following the easy instructions. You can also still pay by check if you prefer. Join or renew now, save \$5.00, and tell your friends and co-workers how easy it is to join MASCA.

The MASCA business year runs from July 1 of each year through June 30 of the following year. All memberships and renewals are normally \$20.00 regardless of the month in which the member joins or renews. All memberships for the 2011/2012 business year expire on June 30, 2012.

MASCA is a regional affiliate of the American Correctional Association (ACA), the American Probation & Parole Association (APPA), and the American Jail Association (AJA).



## National News

# SUPREME COURT ISSUES LANDMARK RULING ON PRISON OVERCROWDING

Summarized by  
Anthony Czarnecki

In a landmark decision announced in May 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court held that a 10-year period of prison overcrowding in the state of California was so severe that it violated the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment ban on "cruel and unusual punishment". To remedy the crisis, the Supreme Court affirmed a lower Federal Court decision that directed California to reduce its prisoner population by 30,000 within 2 years.

The 5-4 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court (*Brown v. Plata*), written by Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, noted a serious breakdown in mental health treatment and medical services that was directly linked to overcrowding levels – leading to unnecessary deaths in custody.

The majority opinion – joined by Justices Breyer, Ginsburg, Kagan, and Sotomayor – indicated that: "For years, the medical and mental health care provided by California's prisons has fallen short of minimum constitutional requirements and has failed to meet prisoners' basic health needs. Needless suffering and death have been the well-documented result... Because of a shortage of treatment beds, suicidal inmates may be held in telephone-booth sized cages without toilets...Prisoners suffering from physical illness also receive severely deficient care."

Two class-action lawsuits – one initiated in 1990 on mental health treatment and another in 2001 on medical care – formed the basis of the Court's ruling. A lower Federal Court had appointed a "special master" in 1995 to monitor prison conditions, but remedial efforts by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) were not sufficient enough to reduce overcrowding and its adverse impact on mental health and medical services.

CDCR Secretary Matthew Cate issued a statement, indicating that: "It is disappointing that the court did not consider the numerous improvements made in health-care delivery to inmates in the past five years, as well as the significant reduction in the inmate population."

He pledged compliance with the Court's ruling, but was hopeful that the lower Federal Court would establish "more appropriate timeframes" to reduce overcrowding.

In forceful language, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that: "A prison that deprives

prisoners of basic sustenance, including adequate medical care, is incompatible with the concept of human dignity and has no place in civilized society. If government fails to fulfill this obligation, the courts have a responsibility to remedy the resulting Eighth Amendment violation...This extensive and ongoing constitutional violation requires a remedy, and a remedy will not be achieved without a reduction in overcrowding."

The majority decision was vigorously opposed in dissenting opinions by Justices Alito, Roberts, Scalia, and Thomas.

Facing a Federal Court order to reduce its inmate population by 11,000 before December 2011 and by an additional 34,000 before June 2013, California has developed a criminal justice "realignment plan" that will transfer many non-violent and less serious offenders to County jails and County probation departments. At present, California's prison system is operating at 180% of capacity. Implementation of the

lower Federal Court order will reduce its prisoner population to 135% of capacity. Concerned about public safety, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and Police Chief Charlie Beck are planning to re-assign 150 police officers to help monitor the former prisoners who will be returning to Los Angeles. County jails and County probation departments will receive some new State funds for prisoner re-entry.

California's large prisoner population is partly due to the strictest "three strikes law" in the country. It allows life imprisonment without parole to be applied to a third offense, which can be a misdemeanor conviction. Past efforts to modify this law by voter referendum and legislative action have failed in the recent past.

As a result of the *Brown v. Plata* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, the "realignment plan" in California will be closely watched by

correctional systems throughout the United States.

For the complete text of the Supreme Court's historic ruling, visit their website at: [www.supremecourt.gov](http://www.supremecourt.gov)



**The Middle Atlantic States Correctional Association (MASCA)** is a professional organization comprised of members from Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, and the District of Columbia for those working, supporting or studying for a career in institutional and community based corrections.

MASCA is a regional affiliate of the American Correctional Association (ACA), the American Probation & Parole Association (APPA), and the American Jail Association (AJA).

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