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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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Pat Quinn
GOVERNOR

December 10, 2009

To the Honorable Members of the General Assembly:

While the federal government has not yet made the decision to purchase Thomson Correctional Center ("Thomson"), I would like to share with you an update on the potential purchase of Thomson.

As you may know, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) provided notice to the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability (COGFA) and recommended closure of Thomson under Section 5-10 of the State Facilities Closure Act. COGFA has scheduled a public hearing on December 22 at 2:00pm at Sterling High School Centennial Auditorium in Sterling. IDOC will also be providing a tour of the facility to interested members of the General Assembly at 11:00am on the same day.

Last month, President Obama and I discussed how Jerry Hebel, the Village President of Thomson, suggested to me in October that Thomson could be better utilized by the federal Bureau of Prisons (BoP). I certainly agree.

The State of Illinois invested \$128 million to build this state-of-the-art, maximum-security prison. During this historic fiscal crisis, we do not have \$54 million to operate the facility on an annual basis, nor does the need to do so exist. When planning for Thomson began during Fiscal Year 1996, the state prison population was projected to be nearly 83,000 by November 2009. But those projections are nearly 38,000 short of the current prison population. This facility can be better utilized by the federal government.

Thomson would house approximately 1,600-2,000 federal inmates as a BoP-run facility. Thomson would also house a limited number of detainees currently located in Guantanamo Bay in a completely separate portion of the facility operated by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD).

If this proposal moves forward, BoP would operate Thomson as a maximum-security prison with its most restrictive security conditions. BoP, working with DoD, would add even greater security measures, including additional external perimeter security, which will make it the most secure federal prison in the nation.

I will never support a proposal that would jeopardize the safety and security of our state or nation. Neither would our state, county and local law enforcement. The Illinois State Police and the heads of the three main Illinois law enforcement organizations are already in consultation with federal law enforcement authorities, in anticipation of the potential purchase of Thomson by the federal government. Attached is their letter to

Attorney General Eric Holder and Defense Secretary Robert Gates expressing their plan to continue working cooperatively with the federal government. They also emphasized that with the appropriate federal support they “strongly believe that the operation of this facility can be conducted without any increased risk to the public.”

Military leaders such as Defense Secretary Gates, General David Petraeus and General Colin Powell, Senators Lindsey Graham and John McCain, and a variety of diplomats, including Henry Kissinger, James Baker and Condoleezza Rice, all believe that Guantanamo Bay must close. Former U.S. Attorney, Governor of Illinois and 9/11 Commission member Jim Thompson also believes this is the right step to take.

I also would like to clear up some additional misinformation about this proposal:

- As outlined by the DoD, detainees will not be authorized to receive visitors with the exception of law enforcement personnel, legal representation and organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- No detainees transferred from Guantanamo to the United States will be released domestically. The President signed two laws earlier this year that would prohibit such release. It is our understanding no detainees transferred to Thomson will be tried in Illinois federal courts.
- Thirty-five inmates with a nexus to or history of international or domestic terrorism are currently housed in the federal prison in Marion, Illinois, and others are located throughout the country.

The White House Council of Economic Advisors has estimated that up to 3,800 jobs and more than \$1 billion of economic activity in Illinois will be generated during the first four years of operation by the federal government. That report is attached.

People and communities throughout Northwest Illinois have wholeheartedly endorsed this proposal, including the Village of Thomson, City of Galena, City of Rockford, City of Freeport, Carroll, Stephenson and Whiteside County Boards, Illinois Quad City Chamber of Commerce, Lee County Industrial Development Association and Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce. They and many others support this opportunity to put people back to work and to jumpstart the regional economy.

We are prepared to offer additional briefings on this proposal. Please feel free to follow up with my staff.

Sincerely,



Pat Quinn
Governor