



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

Senate Passes Bill Requiring Economic Development Officials Make Re-Development Plans for Closing Correctional Facilities, In Order To Save Jobs

DARREL J. AUBERTINE June 14, 2010

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ALBANY (June 14, 2010)—Continuing on a commitment to economic growth and good jobs in Central and Northern New York and throughout the state, Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine and his colleagues in the Senate today unanimously approved legislation requiring for the redevelopment and reuse of state prison facilities considered for closure.

The legislation (S.7068) requires the Commissioner of Economic Development to issue an adaptive reuse plan for state prison facilities that are scheduled to be shut down.

“For our Upstate communities hosting correctional facilities, be it Ogdensburg, Watertown, Gouverneur or Cape Vincent, the economic impact is very real and surrounding businesses depend on these facilities,” said Sen. Aubertine, chair of the Senate Upstate Caucus and the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. “The Department of Corrections is not in a position to make economic development decisions. Our priority should be to keep these prisons open, but with this legislation, we are putting the correct agency in place to develop a plan to protect the economic future of our communities before the state can close a prison. We cannot afford to pull jobs out of a community and expect DOCS to pick up the pieces of a broken economy.”

Under current law, the commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) must provide local governments and employees at least twelve months advance notice of a prison closure and issue an adaptive reuse plan for the facility. However, the DOCS commissioner is not in the best position to determine the most appropriate and economically viable reuse of these facilities because of a lack of comprehension regarding economic impacts of the facility, or its lack thereof. As a result, the consideration of closing unnecessary prisons has been met with fear and concern, rather than seen as an opportunity to attract new industry to the community.

Today’s legislation also requires that local government officials as well as other relevant agencies, authorities and stakeholders be consulted in the development of the reuse plan.

