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## Important Information about Prison Relocation to I-80 & 7200 W Site

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AUGUST 17, 2015

Dear Legislator:

The individual and organizational members of the People Not Prisons coalition ask you to please consider the following information when voting on the Prison Relocation Commission's recommendation to relocate the Utah State Prison from its current site in Draper to a new site three miles west of Salt Lake City International Airport.

**People Not Prisons believes this is an appropriate site for the new prison facility.** It is close to medical services, courts and legal resources, rehabilitation facilities and services, medical and mental health treatment, as well as to inmates' families and volunteers along the Wasatch Front. There is also enough open land to build a modern and innovative facility from the ground up, utilizing a rehabilitative model that will allow for more progressive correctional approaches, such as direct observation of inmates by officers.

We want our elected officials to be aware of the many benefits that will come to inmates, correctional officers and the overall criminal justice system with a newly-built prison. **We believe that these improvements are not likely to be made if the prison is left in its current location.** These important benefits include:

- Additional space for programming, vocational training (for men *and* women), and outdoor recreational areas for prisoners of all security levels;
- A modern building design that facilitates a reduction in the current use of solitary confinement and restrictive housing conditions, specifically for inmates with mental health issues;
- Improved on-site medical and mental health treatment facilities;
- "Step-down" facilities that more smoothly transition exiting inmates back into community life; and
- Gender-responsive facilities for female inmates.

The People Not Prisons coalition encourages legislators to remain engaged in the next phase of the prison relocation process. **It is also critical that corrections experts, Salt Lake City officials, west side neighborhood residents, and prisoner advocates have a seat at the table to ensure the new facility makes the most of Utah's recent criminal justice reform efforts in its design and programming.** This will help ensure that Utah's new prison will:

- **offer more space for programming** than does the current facility in Draper;
- **facilitate advanced staff training** toward correctional best practices that enhance rehabilitation;
- **maximize safer correctional design** for the security of both inmates and correctional staff;

- **provide better on-site medical and mental health treatment** to inmates;
- **reduce the use of restrictive housing and solitary confinement;**
- **offer significant vocational opportunities** for both male and female prisoners;
- **provide ample safe outdoor recreation access** even for prisoners in maximum security; and
- **work in concert with more plentiful community-based treatment beds** (including community correctional facilities and additional in-patient substance abuse treatment), which will require additional future investment.

Now that a site has been recommended, policymakers must refocus their energies and attention on ongoing criminal justice reforms that will result in fewer non-violent, low-risk Utahns serving time in prison. This will allow correctional dollars to be reinvested in front-end diversion programs that enhance public safety while ensuring justice for all Utahns.

**We believe that the relocation of Utah State Prison will advance ongoing criminal justice reform efforts, enhance public safety, help to protect correctional staff, and better fulfill Utah's constitutional obligations to incarcerated individuals.**

Best regards,

***The People Not Prisons Coalition***

*PNP is a loose coalition of advocacy groups working on behalf of people with mental health conditions, people recovering from substance use disorders, and men and women caught up in Utah's criminal justice system. Our Coalition includes but is not limited to: Utah Association of Addiction Treatment Providers (UAATP); Odyssey House; First Step House; Utah AFL-CIO; Disability Law Center; Utah Prison Support; ACLU of Utah; New Roads Behavioral Health; Utah Prisoner Advocate Network (UPAN); the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City; and several individual criminal justice reform advocates from various Utah communities.*

