

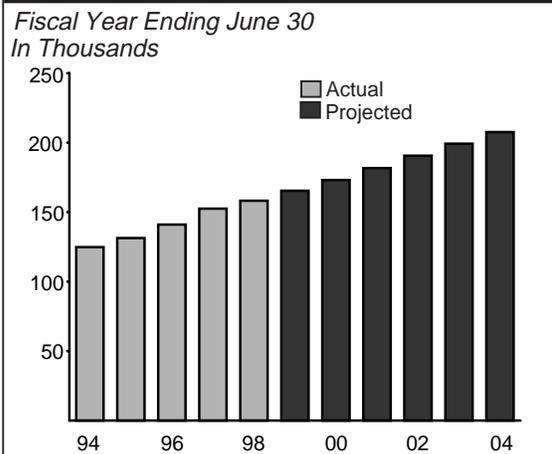
## New Inmate Projections Show Growth

The California Department of Corrections (CDC) recently released its fall 1998 inmate and parole population projections. As of June 30, 1998, the CDC housed 158,000 inmates in prisons, fire and conservation camps, and community correctional facilities. The new projections, which are updated by the department every six months, assume that the inmate count will reach 208,000 by June 30, 2004—an increase of more than 49,000 inmates, or 30 percent, over the six-year projection period. The historical and projected trend in inmate population growth is shown in Figure 1.

This projected level of growth is less than CDC's spring 1998 forecast. The CDC attributes the differences between these projections primarily to a trend whereby parolees are not being returned to prison for parole violations or for the commission of new crimes in the numbers that had been anticipated. (A comparison of the old and new projections is shown in Figure 2 [see page 2].) Even these new projections may prove to be high, if recent trends persist. As of September 27, 1998, the actual inmate population count was about 1,000

**Figure 1**

### Inmate Population Growth Continuing



inmates below the number expected under the new projections, according to CDC.

In contrast to the projections of the *inmate* population, the *parole* population is estimated to grow more rapidly than CDC had anticipated. As of June 30, 1998, CDC parole agents supervised about 109,000 parolees. The fall

1998 projections assume that the parole caseload will reach 135,000 by June 30, 2004—an increase of about 26,500 parolees, or 24 percent, over the six-year projection period. The same underlying trend that is slowing growth in the prison population—the lower rate of return to prison of parolees for parole violations and new crimes—is resulting in higher than expected parole caseloads.

## The Population Forecast Has Important Implications

The fall 1998 projections indicate that the state continues to face a major challenge to accommodate the steadily growing population of prison inmates, but will have some additional time to prepare to meet that challenge.

Based on projected inmate population, the prison system is approaching its long-term housing capacity of 175,000 inmates (including capacity for 4,000 inmates funded in September 1998). By long-term housing capacity, we mean that most of the general inmate population is housed two per cell with double-bunking in dormitories and gymnasiums. This capacity does not include about 7,200 beds—triple bunks in prison dormitories and gymnasiums and double bunks on dayroom floors in celled housing units—that the department can use but considers to be a “high-security risk” and thus not viable long-term housing. When the spring 1998 projections were released, CDC expected the inmate population to reach the long-term capacity level in mid-2000. The new projections indicate that this will not occur until at least a year later.

Recent actions taken by the Legislature and the Governor (and not yet reflected in CDC’s

**Figure 2**

**Total Inmate Population  
Recent CDC Projections**

June 30 Population <sup>a</sup>	Projection as of:	
	Spring 1998	Fall 1998
1999	170,101	165,395
2004	214,223	207,620
2007	244,583	240,779

<sup>a</sup> For selected years.

population projections) will likely cause the date the system reaches long-term capacity to slip even further. A \$177 million legislative package signed into law by the Governor on September 14, 1998, will add almost 4,000 beds to the prison system (half in state-run prison facilities and half through contracts for inmate bed space with private-sector vendors). Moreover, the legislative package, together with an additional \$13 million provided through the *1998-99 Budget Act*, expands state and local programs designed to slow the rate of growth in the inmate population. (The entire legislative package is described in more detail on page 4.) We estimate that, over the next six years, these new or expanded programs will reduce the need for additional prison beds by at least 5,000.

We believe the recent actions taken by the Legislature and Governor will benefit the state by holding down future state incarceration costs while improving public safety. However, we do not believe that this package by itself will be sufficient to address the entire long-term prison capacity problem facing the state. After taking the effect of this package into account, we

estimate that the state would still need to provide additional space for as many as 27,000 inmates by June 30, 2004. That is the equivalent of five to six state-run prisons carrying a one-time construction cost of \$1.6 billion and annual ongoing operational costs of more than \$500 million.

## Conclusion

The latest CDC projections suggest that the Legislature and administration will need to undertake further efforts in 1999 to accommodate future growth in the inmate population. In our view, such efforts should emphasize a balanced approach, weighted almost evenly between adding new prison capacity and enacting policy changes that would reduce the expected inmate population growth. We offered such an approach in our May 1997 report, *Addressing the State's Long-Term Inmate Population Growth*. The package enacted in 1998 was consistent with the principle outlined in that report, but additional steps will be needed.

Such a balanced approach should include measures that will reduce the need for addi-

tional prison beds—such as restructuring the state parole system, reform of state sentencing laws, and the expansion and improvement of existing academic, vocational, and Prison Industry Authority programs within the state's 33 prisons that could reduce inmate recidivism. This approach should also include measures that expand prison capacity—by constructing additional new state-run prisons, adding more beds to the grounds of some existing prisons, and/or contracting for more community correctional facility beds with vendors. We believe this balanced approach toward addressing the prison capacity problem will prove cost-effective and will minimize the risks to public safety.

A more detailed discussion of some of these options can be found in our May 1997 report on prison capacity issues; our April 1996 report, *Reforming the Prison Industry Authority*; and in the Judiciary and Criminal Justice Section of the *1998-99 Analysis of the Budget Bill*. We also anticipate offering additional options for addressing the prison capacity issue in the *1999-00 Analysis of the Budget Bill*.

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## Actions Taken on Correctional Issues In the 1998 Legislative Session

The following provisions were enacted in Chapter 500 (SB 491, Brulte), Chapter 501 (SB 1485, Rosenthal), Chapter 502 (SB 2108, Vasconcellos), Chapter 526 (AB 2321, Knox), and the 1998-99 Budget Act.

**Administrative Segregation Cells.** Provided \$74 million to build 1,000 high-security administrative segregation cells, freeing-up space to house 1,900 additional state inmates.

**Community Correctional Facility Beds.** Provided four separate 500-bed facilities run by vendors (2,000 beds in all), with 1,000 intensive substance abuse treatment beds.

**Expansion of Work and Education Assignments.** Provided \$2.5 million to add 2,500 work, academic, and vocational education program spaces for inmates.

**In-Prison Substance Abuse Treatment and Aftercare for Parolees.** Provided \$10 million to programs at existing state prisons and to expand residential community programs.

**Preventing Parolee Crime Program.** Provided \$3 million to expand and improve existing programs to assist homeless, illiterate, unemployed, and drug-addicted parolees.

**Parolee Casework Services.** Provided \$5.5 million to help parolees safely reintegrate into society, including temporary help with transportation, housing, and other services.

**Drug-Addicted Female Offenders.** Provided \$6 million for three pilot programs providing substance abuse treatment and intensive training and counseling for female parolees with custody of minor children.

**Jobs Placement Services.** Provided \$1 million to expand the existing Jobs Plus program to help inmates and parolees with comprehensive job development and job placement assistance.

**Prerelease Programs for High-Risk Offenders.** Provided \$1 million to enhance prerelease programs for inmates who pose a high risk of returning to state prison.

**Mentally Ill Offenders.** Provided \$27 million for a competitive grant program to county governments to plan and implement programs to provide graduated sanctions for mentally ill offenders.

**Juvenile Challenge Grants.** Provided \$60 million (including \$10 million in the budget act) to continue a grant program to county governments to foster innovative programs to prevent juvenile crime and delinquency.

### About the LAO

California Update is published monthly—except January and February—by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO). The LAO is a nonpartisan office which provides fiscal and policy information and advice to the legislature. The Legislative Analyst's Office is located at 925 L Street, Suite 1000, Sacramento, CA 95814.

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