



---

August 1, 2011

## Company wants to build temporary W.Va. jail units

By [Phil Kabler](#)

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Representatives of a Georgia company pitched a short-term, and relatively inexpensive, solution to West Virginia's prison and regional jail overcrowding crisis to legislators Monday.

The proposal: At each of the state's 10 regional jails, install a temporary jail facility, each housing 144 inmates.

Proteus On-Demand Facilities of Austell, Ga., proposed installing the new facilities, with bed space for a total of 1,440 inmates, and leasing the space to the state for \$10 per bed per day for five years.

"What we're proposing to do is take the pressure off the boiling pot ... and alleviate the immediate overcrowding crisis," the company's Paul Looney told an interim committee on corrections and regional jails.

As of July 28, the state's 10 regional jails were housing 4,565 inmates, or 1,781 inmates over original design capacity. The overcrowding is caused almost entirely by convicted felons being housed in regional jails, because the state's prisons are filled to capacity.

Proteus' proposal would cost the state \$26.28 million over five years -- far less than the estimated \$200 million cost to build a permanent, 1,200-bed prison, Looney said.

He noted that if bonds were sold to finance the prison, the true cost of the project would approach \$320 million, with interest payments.

During a presentation, Proteus' showed how the aluminum and steel frame buildings are constructed, featuring prefabricated modules for such features as bathroom facilities and guard stations. The facilities can be modified as requested to include classrooms, recreation space, disciplinary segregation units, and other needs.

Proteus has constructed numerous temporary jail facilities around the country, the closest being a 266-bed unit in Chesapeake, Va., Looney said.

It also constructs other temporary facilities for retail, office space, warehousing, sporting events, and housing, with its most notable project being a 100,000-square-foot center constructed for media covering the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston.

Looney showed a time-lapse video, showing how the massive facility was installed in just over two weeks, and disassembled in 14 days after the convention.

The company primarily uses local labor, sometimes including inmate labor, to build the facilities, giving a boost to local economies, he said.

"We believe we can benefit the state of West Virginia by stimulating the economy in the regions where we are building these facilities," said Kasi Miner of Proteus. "This project is a public safety issue for the public, the staff, and the inmates."

Looney said that because their facilities tend to have nicer accommodations and less overcrowding than the brick-and-mortar jails, there are usually fewer inmate behavior issues in the temporary facilities.

"The feedback we have received from our clients is, inmates tend to behave better in our structures," he said.

Although the proposed leases would be for five years, the state would have the option of extending the contracts, most likely at a reduced per-day rate, Looney said.

Some localities have found other post-jail uses for their temporary facilities, converting them to work-release centers, or other uses, he said.

"Is this a kick-the-can-down-the-road solution?" asked Delegate Jim Morgan, D-Cabell.

"We consider this a bridge-builder," Looney responded, saying it would bridge the overcrowding crisis until a permanent solution can be reached.

Afterward, Delegate David Perry, D-Fayette, co-chairman of the interim committee, said temporary jail facilities are worth consideration by the Legislative, particularly if the Division of Corrections fails to come up with plans to relieve overcrowding.


*Reach Phil Kabler at [ph...@wvgazette.com](mailto:ph...@wvgazette.com) or 304-348-1220.*

**11 Comments**

**Post a Comment**

---

Posted By: nomojo

 Report Abuse

Put them in the yards behind the Walls at Moundsville!

Posted at: August 01, 2011 8:41:07 pm

Posted By: bigperm1994

[△ Report Abuse](#)

I hope that the decision makers have considered..and are prepared to add additional staff positions to go along with these pre fab units. You can put up a new building, but someone still has to supervise them.

Posted at: August 02, 2011 12:03:02 am

Posted By: mitch3043

[△ Report Abuse](#)

This sounds all fine and dandy but I fail to see anywhere in the article what will be done about staffing these new addition or will this simply result in putting more supervisory responsibilities on already understaffed and overtasked correctional personnel? Not the the Division of Corrections is a well-oiled machine without any faults, but the overcrowding is not solely it's fault nor should it solely be it's repsonsibility to "fix." Perhaps reviewing some of the state's archaic laws and sentencing guidelines is in need as well.

Posted at: August 02, 2011 7:09:21 am

Posted By: Grouse

[△ Report Abuse](#)

Put 'em in tents.

Posted at: August 02, 2011 9:56:17 am

Posted By: dumb hillbilly

[△ Report Abuse](#)

Do they change occupants when moving the units from the Democratic National Convention to a jail site? LOL

Posted at: August 02, 2011 11:36:28 am