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## **L.A. County officials say crime would rise under prison plan**

**Yaroslavsky and Antonovich say proposed transition of inmates from state prison to county lockups would also add to fiscal burdens.**

By Rong-Gong Lin II, Los Angeles Times

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Los Angeles County supervisors on Tuesday condemned Sacramento's cost-cutting decision to keep some state prisoners in local lockups and have parolees be supervised by county agencies, asserting that both would lead to an increase in crime. While discussing a prisoner transition plan submitted by Sheriff Lee Baca, Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich said he expected county jails to quickly run out of space if they must continue to handle the 7,000 low-level felons that courts normally send to state prison each year. The already-strained county Probation Department will also see an increase in probationers it must oversee. "It's a system that's meant to fail," Antonovich said, "and who is it going to fail? Every neighborhood, every community where these people are going to be running around...It's a Pandora's box. It's the bar scene — a violent bar scene that you saw in 'Star Wars' — except they're all crazy and nuts." Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky noted that the problem started when state legislators decided "to dump their

financial woes on us. This is going to impact crime adversely in communities, without a doubt." Because of the state's continuing budget and prison overcrowding crisis, on Oct. 1 California will begin shifting some low-level nonviolent offenders from the state prison and parole system to its 58 county jails and probation departments. Antonovich said it is likely that Los Angeles County will run out of jail beds unless it "uses other models of supervisions such as electronic monitoring, work furloughs, weekenders and GPS tracking." "It's irresponsible for us to turn around and dump these [prisoners] into our communities with an ankle bracelet and hope they don't re-offend," Antonovich said. Without finding a way to increase prison time, Antonovich said, "I believe we'll have a spike in crime." In the meantime, sheriff's officials expressed worry over how state parolees would be transferred over to the county probation system. Currently, when inmates are released from state prison and transferred to the state parole system, they are given \$200 so they can buy themselves a bus ticket home with instructions to contact a state parole officer within two business days. But county authorities say that system could allow just-released prisoners to flee without making contact with a county probation officer. Baca is proposing that the state turn over Los Angeles-bound inmates to county jailers just before they are released, so they can be given a mental evaluation and linked with nonprofit groups able to help them adjust to life after prison. Baca's proposal seeks to help released prisoners adopt a law-abiding lifestyle, sheriff's officials said. Supervisor Gloria Molina, however, cautioned against the county taking on an added responsibility, and said she was worried about risking lawsuits should something go wrong. "I think it's a huge mistake trying to take ownership of a prisoner when, in fact, he really isn't yet our responsibility," Molina said. "I think we're walking on a very, very dangerous trail here...by asking for more responsibilities and more duties with less money." [ron.lin@latimes.com](mailto:ron.lin@latimes.com)