

**Congress of the United States**

Washington, DC 20515

May 25, 2012

Attorney General Eric Holder  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

Our nation's overcrowded federal prison system presents a serious problem, with the Bureau of Prisons reporting that at the end of FY2011, the federal prison system was operating at 39% over rated capacity. However, opening the Thomson Correctional Facility as a Federal Prison represents a solution that would alleviate prison overcrowding of the most dangerous offenders and have a positive economic impact in an area of the country that still has a higher unemployment rate than the national average in the President's home state of Illinois. Purchasing the prison outright would also be more cost-efficient for the taxpayer, as opposed to constructing a prison from scratch. Thomson is ideally suited to help the Bureau of Prisons meet the current demands on prison capacity.

We respectfully urge you to submit a new reprogramming request to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees that would allow the Department of Justice to purchase the Thomson Correctional Facility from the State of Illinois for use within the Federal Bureau of Prisons to address overcrowding issues. We would also encourage you within this request to unequivocally state that the Thomson Correctional Facility would not be used to house any individuals currently detained at the U.S. Naval Station in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

As you know, Congress has repeatedly enacted laws, through the Defense Authorization and Appropriations process that bar the use of funds to transfer or release Guantanamo detainees into the United States as well as prohibiting funds to be used to construct, renovate or expand any facility in the United States to house Guantanamo detainees. We understand that in previous correspondence with Illinois lawmakers, you noted that the Administration opposes the restriction of funds to transfer Guantanamo detainees to the United States. In reality, this opposition raises concerns about the Administration's plans for these detainees, which has unfortunately hampered the process to purchase Thomson prison. We will continue the fight to preserve and extend these restrictions so that these terrorists are never brought to United States soil.

By adhering to the law, issuing a reprogramming request, and stating unequivocally that the Administration will never use the Thomson Correctional Facility to house Guantanamo Bay detainees we believe this will be an acceptable compromise to allow the opening of that facility as a federal maximum-security prison. The operation of this facility would create more than

1,100 jobs and would boost local business sales. A federal prison at Thomson offers an ideal solution for the people of northwest Illinois as well as our overcrowded federal prison system. With high unemployment, the people of northwest Illinois are in desperate need for jobs and have been subject to uncertainty time and time again over the last nine years that Thomson would open as a state or federal prison and provide them with much needed direct or indirect jobs.

We strongly encourage the Bureau of Prisons at the Justice Department to continue to pursue the option of purchasing the Thomson prison. It will relieve the pressures on the current system and bring in great economic support to northwest Illinois.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Bobby Schilling  
House of Representatives



Don Manzullo  
House of Representatives