

# United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510-1304

July 11, 2012

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable James Cole  
Deputy Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder and Deputy Attorney General Cole:

I write today to ask that the Department promptly send a new reprogramming request to Congress for the acquisition and activation of the Thomson Correctional Center in Carroll County, Illinois, for use exclusively as a Bureau of Prisons maximum security facility.

As you know, in May 2011, the Department and the State of Illinois agreed on a purchase price of \$165 million. The Department then transmitted a request to Congress for the reprogramming of these funds from within the Department of Justice/Bureau of Prisons accounts. Senator Barbara Mikulski, Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science, approved this reprogramming request. However, her House counterpart, Congressman Frank Wolf, denied the request. Mr. Wolf's rejection of this reprogramming and his continued opposition to this project has denied my home state hundreds of important jobs for more than 14 months.

I have repeatedly pointed out that the sale of the Thomson Correctional Center to the federal government enjoys broad-based local and state support. It will lead to significant economic development in the Northwestern Illinois/Eastern Iowa region, including more than 1,100 direct jobs. The Bureau of Prisons believes that the acquisition of Thomson will help alleviate the safety problems associated with serious federal prison overcrowding, currently running higher than 50 percent over rated capacity in maximum security facilities, and especially help increase the safety of the system's prison guards.

I appreciate your restatement last month at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing that the Obama Administration will not seek to transfer any detainees from U.S. facilities at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to Thomson. While I believe that this issue was settled more than a year ago, some in the Illinois Congressional Delegation continue to look for excuses such as this to take the pressure off of Mr. Wolf and to suggest that the Obama Administration is somehow to blame for the delay.

Simply put, the State of Illinois and the Bureau of Prisons have agreed on a price and a process for purchase, the federal funds have been identified, and the issue of detainees has been settled. The only hold up is the signature of Congressman Wolf on a standard reprogramming request. Any suggestion of other outstanding issues is inaccurate.

I respectfully ask you to promptly resubmit a reprogramming request to Congress for the acquisition and activation of Thomson. Governor Pat Quinn and I stand ready to work with you to open the Thomson Correctional Center as a modern, federal maximum security prison that brings significant jobs and economic benefits to the region.

I appreciate your continued support of this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rich Durbin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator