

Early Release of Prisoners in California and the Implications for Technology Vendors

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One of the most politically divisive issues in the ongoing struggle to find a solution to California's budget crisis has been the proposal to drastically reduce the population of California's state prison system. For the purposes of this blog I will leave the politics to the politicians, and approach the issue from the perspective of an observer of the corrections technology industry.

The most obvious direct impact of the conditional release of tens of thousands of prisoners is increased usage of electronic monitoring (ankle bracelet) contracts to keep tabs on the former inmates. Additionally, if the short term strategy of avoiding prison time for non-violent offenders becomes a long term policy, the value of these contracts could drastically increase, assuming conviction rates remain constant. GovWin is currently tracking 14 offender electronic monitoring contracts at all levels of government in the State of California. For example GovWin Opp ID [54693](#) in Trinity County.

Another factor that is often times overlooked when focusing on short term cost savings is the recidivism rate of the state's prisoners. The state reports a recidivism rate of roughly 70%. Combine this figure with high unemployment in the state, further reducing the availability of legal means of making money, and it is likely that quite a few of these individuals will find themselves occupying the cells they once vacated. While this is a negative statistic for society in general and California in particular, it does benefit those technology vendors who are concerned about the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) having a continued need for their products and services.

A large movement of prisoners out of the CDCR's jurisdiction and into local jails and probation systems could serve to expose inadequacies in overwhelmed jail management and case management systems. Although budgets may be too tight for complete upgrades and overhauls, this influx of activity has potential to raise the priority level of such projects. GovWin will be keeping a close eye on local level strategic planning in order to monitor this trend.

The coming weeks will determine how many prisoners are released from California's prisons, if any. One thing that is always certain is that any product or service that can produce significant cost savings or risk avoidance (particularly in terms of violence against guards) will gain the attention of corrections purchasing officials.