



MCO IN-DEPTH: CORRECTIONS PTSD STUDY, PRISON CLOSURE ARE IN MDOC BUDGET

By *Jeremy Tripp*

Director, Government and Political Affairs

For the past few months, [MCO has reported](#) about the ongoing debate over the 2018-19 corrections budget.

In April, MCO Presidents signed onto [letters](#) opposing the various budget proposals and [asking legislators](#) to reconsider their position.

With the House and Senate differing in their recommendations, the budget was sent to conference committee where members of both chambers were selected to settle their differences and come up with a joint recommendation.

MCO weighed in heavily throughout the process, meeting with legislators and advocating for major budget items.

On Tuesday, the [conference report](#) was released and includes a recommendation

that an unnamed correctional facility close sometime during the fiscal year that begins October 2018.

At a projected savings of \$19.2 million, MCO argued against this proposal on the grounds that closing another prison could jeopardize the safety and security of the MDOC and a facility closure should be handled responsibly and not forced if bed space did not warrant such an action. In the face of our opposition, the conference report opted to recommend a closure.

In addition, the budget also included several gains for corrections staff that members should be aware of and were at the top of MCO's priority list during discussions.

- Conference includes \$4.9 million in one-time funding to train 359 new corrections officers. House and Senate had both

proposed reducing this amount.

- Conference includes \$50,000 to fund a study to examine Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among correctional officers. House subcommittee had originally included at the request of MCO.

- Conference includes \$13.2 million in transition costs to end private food contract and return to state-run food service. The Senate had cut all transition funding in its budget.

- Conference removes Senate provision requiring MDOC to require their health care provider to privatize prison nurses.

The corrections budget was passed with all members of the conference voting yes.

Read our full In-Depth on the MDOC budget [on our website](#). MCO will keep members updated.

AROUND THE STATE: CMO ASSAULTED; MTU INMATES UNCOOPERATIVE IN EMERGENCY

A WCC inmate on POA watch punched an officer in the head several times when the CMO opened his cell door to give him toilet paper.

The serious assault happened June 1 in Pod 2, which is a Level IV acute care unit. When the corrections medical officer cracked the cell door to pass the toilet paper, the inmate threw open the door and punched him about eight times in the head. The cell door had to be opened because it doesn't have a slot.

As officers were running to the scene, the CMO stumbled and fell into a door, which fractured a vertebra in his spine. He also suffered a face injury. The officer was admitted to a nearby hospital.

Later, a weapon was also found in the attacker's cell.

Please keep this officer in your prayers.

In less than two weeks, Gus Harrison officers have responded to 12 inmate fights or assaults, intervened in five suicide attempts, and uncovered at

least five pieces of dangerous contraband.

Staff also found marijuana twice in that timeframe. On June 1, the visiting room officer saw a prisoner retrieve something from a woman's pants and swallow it. It later was determined to be marijuana. A sergeant also found marijuana in a Level II inmate's locker June 4.

On June 3, officers found an inmate with a collection of contraband tools, including an Allen wrench, driver bits, sand paper, soldering flux, and a jerry-rigged power source, apparently for heating metal.

Two officers were also assaulted by inmates reaching through food slots.

On May 28, the power went out at MTU, prompting an emergency lockdown of the facility in the evening hours.

During the lockdown, about 40 prisoners housed in David Unit, a special privilege unit housing Vocational Village prisoners, reportedly became uncoopera-

tive and argumentative with unit officers when given direction to return to their cells after being let out to use the restroom. The situation was not resolved until shift commanders entered the unit and assisted in gaining prisoner compliance.

MCO leaders are investigating the incident. On June 4, MCO President Byron Osborn and Vice President Ray Sholtz went to MTU and spoke with many officers about the situation. Great work to the officers who managed this potentially dangerous event.

"I have some questions and concerns about how this incident was handled by the MTU administration," Osborn said. "Prisoners are expected to be cooperative with unit officers. This should be a given in an honors-type unit, especially in an emergency situation. The fact that shift commanders had to respond to the unit is alarming and I will inquire as to how, and if, the MTU administration plans to address this."