

# How prisons can save money

[Government](#), [Corruption](#)



How Prisons Can Save Money On July 10th, 2003, a fire was started just east of Farmington Utah. The fire consumed over 2000 acres of land, threatened dozens of homes, and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to fight. The following day a thirty three year old man named Josef Heinz Bruhl confessed to starting the blaze, when asked for his motives he said it was to because he wanted to be sent to prison. Now I'm not trying to suggest that anybody with normal mental capacity would ever do something like this, obviously this guy has problems.

But the fact that anybody would ever want to go to jail to better there situation says volumes on what is wrong with our prison system. Part of the problem is that each year the government spends about 25, 000 dollars per inmate per year (in 2007), someone with a life sentence costs about 1. 5 million dollars, and it ends up costing over 30 billion dollars each year most of which falls onto us, the tax payers. This is because people that are put into prison aren't doing enough and they can basically just sit around all day if they want to.

They get a bed to sleep in, three square meals a day, television (usually with cable), a recreation room, and many other things that they can waste their time doing as they wait out their sentence. I'm not trying to say that prison is all peaches and cream, but we could do a lot to make prison a much less inviting place. By doing so we could save the government millions, if not billions of dollars. Prison needs to be a deterrent not just a consequence for breaking the law. It should be the last place anybody would ever want to go.

And rather than just “doing your time” you should literally be “paying your debt to society”. First off the prisons need to start making cuts. Prison needs to become less of a waiting area where people pass the time watching T. V. waiting for their return to the real world. We could start by cutting the cable cord, prisoners shouldn't be allowed to enjoy a luxury that many in the country don't have. A few states have decided that cable is fine as long as the prisoner or their family pay for it.

States could generate a lot of profit by charging more for these services than what the cable company is already charging. Also prisons are employing people that they don't really need. Right now the state of Washington is offering three jobs for a Recreation and Athletics Specialist. This position pays around 3,500 dollars every month. If we could eliminate just two jobs like these from every prison the federal system alone would save over ten million dollars annually. The last thing these people need is some P. E. each setting up some basketball game between two rival gangs, I'm sure they'll manage on their own. The Department of Corrections needs to continue using the prisons to save money in other branches of the government. Right now prisoners do a number of things to keep the inmates productive and occupied while providing them a small source of income. They do things such as make license plates, T. V. stands, chairs, and dressers. They cannot sell these items because it would compete with local business, but they give it to government buildings and the military.

Prisoners also do a lot of community service especially with tasks like road clean-up that saves the community thousands of dollars. Another thing they

could do is create gardens right next to the prison where inmates could grow their own food. Think of how much money a prison could save if they only had to buy half the fruits and vegetables that they are buying now. I've actually heard of one prison having a prison gift shop where people could buy things made at the prison. Another problem is that it's hard to force inmates to work.

We need to find a way to motivate these people to work for their one to two dollar an hour salary. I read that one prison is going to start charging for basic items such as toilet paper and toothpaste. Unfortunately members of the inmate's family usually pay for these items, but if we were to not allow outside support we could almost guarantee that almost everyone would work. Just think of the dilemma that prisoners would have to face, they would have to decide if they don't go to work they won't get toilet paper, toothpaste, or deodorant.

If it were me I would work, and it would probably deter people from crime by turning prison into more of a work camp than a waiting area. I'm sure there are plenty of other things we could do to start generating a profit in the prison system, we just need to start thinking of new more profitable ways we could use this work force. I had an accounting professor who once said that if you can't generate a profit with free labor, you have a serious problem. We have a huge amount of people who work for next to nothing, let's use this to our advantage.

Now with all this money that the government could potentially save, besides going to lower the national deficit, they need to a lot of this money back into

the public educational system. Right now the government spends about 1,600 dollars per student in the U. S. Only 47 percent of inmates have high school diplomas (in 2003). If we were to put more money into the schools we could better the situations of many people who would drop out and get out into the streets where they get involved in crime.

So by better educating the people we have less crime because they can go out into the world and get better jobs and contribute to society. By doing this less people would go to jail and we would end up spending less money. Our prison system is out of control. We actually are letting people go so that we can fit others inside. Prison has to be the ultimate deterrent from crime, if it's not then our prison system is literally failing. We need to decrease the amount of people coming back into jail, and we need to focus on keeping people off the streets in the first place.

If people go to jail they need to learn their lesson and never want to come back again. I have a good friend who when she was little she had a serious biting problem. It became so bad that her dad went out to IFA one day and bought a cattle prod. After trying it on himself, to make sure it didn't hurt too bad, he told his daughter that if she bit again she would get a taste of the cattle prod. Needless to say, she did it again and was cattle prodded, after one time she learned her lesson and she never bit again.

Prison should be like that, after one stay in prison there should be no reason why you would want to go back to a life of crime, because prison should be the worst possible place in the world. If we could do these things we could keep people out of jail and we could use the money to keep people out

of jail rather than using it to keep people in. I know that this isn't just about the money; we need to focus on the people, and making this country better for them and us. But I believe that if we do these things to save our money we can achieve the goal of helping our communities and society by keeping people out of prison.