

Cooperation the Solution to Jail Crises

Cooperation Called Solution to Jail Crowding –
Consultant's Appraisal: He Says S.L. County and Municipalities Need a Uniform Approach
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Been there, haven't done it.

Yet another report says the **Salt Lake County Jail doesn't have to be overcrowded**. The solution lies in cooperation between the County Council and 13 municipalities -- something no one, to date, has figured out how to accomplish.

"This is a report similar to the one we commissioned in 1991," County Councilman Randy Horiuchi said Tuesday. "Here we are 12 years later, fighting the same dragons and demons."

Only a "jail czar with super-human powers" could accomplish such a feat, Horiuchi suggested.

On Tuesday, California-based consultant Alan Kalmanoff told the County Council that now is the time to push objectives that will reduce overcrowding. County Mayor Nancy Workman, District Attorney David Yocom and Sheriff Aaron Kennard are all backing the plan, he said.

But implementation is another matter, Kalmanoff conceded. Communities have to be shown that a better system is good for all concerned, he said. "There is a lot to do. But if you provide a forum so that every [municipality] gets the advantage, they will take it."

The Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC) could take the lead, Kalmanoff said, but not at its present size. The 25-member panel would have to be streamlined to a half-dozen to be effective.

Among the challenges, said CJAC coordinator Gary Dalton, is that the county can cajole municipal police departments and justice courts, but cannot require them to adopt measures aimed at reducing the inmate population.

Many problems contribute to overcrowding, Kalmanoff said. Because there is no countywide arrest policy, offenders are often jailed when citations would be adequate.

Also, justice courts rely too heavily on jail sentences because many cities don't have alternatives - such as substance-abuse programs or work release. Cases are delayed and there are few pretrial release options, so defendants often await trial behind bars.

Keys to reducing the jail population include not booking class B misdemeanants, uniform sentencing guidelines and creation of an agency to efficiently move offenders through the system.

Although bookings have not significantly increased, average sentences have doubled since 1997. But two-thirds of the inmates are not dangerous, Kalmanoff said, and need not be jailed.