



**California has the Ivy League of state prisons:**

Doug McIntyre, Los Angeles Daily News

You've been robbed. Cleaned-out.

I'm not talking about the epidemic of "knock-knock" burglaries in the San Fernando Valley. I'm talking about the paycheck-to-paycheck siphoning of your hard-earned money to pay off political debts to the very people charged with keeping the regular criminals from robbing you blind.

I'm talking about the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, the highest paid guards in the country.

Last week, this news organization reported the cost of keeping an inmate in a California state prison hit the astronomical figure of \$70,810 per year and it will go even higher next year to \$75,000. That's each! It's also \$8,333 more than it would cost to send an inmate to Stanford University. And if we really want to pinch pennies, we could ship our crooks to Harvard University and save \$9,785 per perp.

Think about it. We'd not only save California taxpayers a fortune, but Stanford's football team would be a lock for a bowl bid. This story starts with Gov. Jerry Brown, the 1.0 edition.

Back in 1978, Brown signed the Dills Act, giving public employees collective bargaining rights. That opened the floodgates.

In 1980, the CCPOA's 5,600 members earned \$21,000 a year and paid dues of approximately \$35 a month. With the passage of three-strikes laws in the 1980s and the growth of our gang population, the CCPOA's membership mushroomed to 33,000 members. Today California's prison guards earn more than \$73,000, paying monthly dues of about \$80, which raises \$23 million every year for the union. Of that, \$8 million is spent purchasing politicians.

*In 2011, a slickly produced celebratory video titled "Winning" was posted on the CCPOA's website. A narrator boasted, "Of the 107 candidates endorsed by CCPOA this election, 104, were victorious. ... We've got a lot of friends over there." "Over there" refers to the California Assembly, Senate and governor's mansion.*

Some of the perks handed out over the decades are stunning: An officer who retires at age 50 after 30 years on the job takes home 90 percent of his salary for life. How can the rest of us get a life sentence like that?

But it gets so much crazier. In 2002, after pouring \$1 million into then-Gov. Gray Davis' campaign, the CCPOA got a pay hike of between 28 and 37 percent for its members – at a cost of \$500 million per year to taxpayers.





“Stick ‘em up!”

Amazingly, this contract also gave the guards the right to call in sick without a doctor's note. Surprise, surprise! California's prison guards called in sick 500,000 more hours in 2002 than in 2001, a 27 percent increase.

“The watch and the wallet, hand ‘em over!”

After dumping \$2 million into Brown 2.0's campaign, the CCPOA got eight weeks of vacation a year plus the right to cash out an unlimited amount of unused vacation time at retirement, sending pensions through the ozone layer.

“Gimme that necklace, too!”

And then there's outright corruption.

The highest-paid prison guards in the nation (we battle it out with New Jersey) smuggled 10,000 cellphones to the inmates they're supposed to be guarding, allowing drug dealers and other crime kingpins to run their operations from the safety of the state penitentiary. One guard alone took in \$150,000. Charles Manson has been caught three times with contraband phones.

In 1983, as Brown's first term as governor came to an end; California's prison population had jumped from 24,471 to 34,640, an increase of more than 10,000. Now as he rounds the bend in his second gubernatorial administration, the prison population is 118,383, and that's after we've emptied the jails with Assembly Bill 109 and Propositions 47 and 57. The dollars have been flowing. So let's check the scorecard.

In 1990, the CCPOA gave \$1 million to then-Gov. Pete Wilson, in 1998 alone, \$1.9 million was invested in legislative races, with an additional \$2.3 million going to Davis. In 2008, the CCPOA gave Brown \$2 million. Additionally, they have fought every prison reform that's been proposed while fighting for every enhanced sentencing legislation, because more prisoners mean more prison guards. Today we employ 37,050.

Only an idiot steals with a revolver. The real money comes when you pull a politician out of your pocket.

Being a prison guard is a nasty job. I wouldn't do it for a million dollars a year. Still, why is it the rest of the country manages to staff their penitentiaries at the median cost of \$42,591 per year (according to Salary.com) while the Golden State has passed the \$70,000 threshold? Our prison bars have become bars of gold for the CCPOA.

So move over Princeton and Yale, the new Ivy League is San Quentin, Folsom, Corcoran, Pelican Bay, and the rest of the California state prison system.