

# General Public Comment - Severance



Chair Williams and other Supervisors,

Good morning. I am Larry Severance, speaking today on behalf of CLUE-SB (Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice) and the League of Women Voters. I am a member of CLUE's Board and co-chair of its Criminal Justice Workgroup. I am a co-author of the letter jointly filed by CLUE/LWV as public comment today. I am a member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Santa Barbara one of the faith communities where the Petition presented to you today was circulated. The Petition is signed by more than 350 people throughout our community. We appear here today out of a sense of urgency, asking your immediate attention.

You are our County-wide leaders, and our criminal justice system needs your affirmative leadership now. The federal court mandate issued in Murray requires remedies for the decrepit conditions in the South County jail. You have contracted architects to examine the South County jail's structure and generate planning ideas, but you have not specified scope: how many new or remodeled jail beds are needed, given the 376 certified beds now available in the North County Jail? We ask you to decide now - or at least specify for working purposes - this key, basic question.

In our letter and Petition, CLUE, and the League of Women Voters offer you a publicly-supported perspective, grounded in research. During our tours of the jails, and interviews with criminal justice leaders and custodial staff, we have repeatedly heard that expanding the North County jail may be a sensible and cost-effective alternative to a South County jail remodel. We ask you to specifically examine this option.

We, and all those who signed the Petition, ask and will support you taking a stand based on the recommendations of the experts you have hired: Michael Wilson's jail population report; KPMG's multi-year review of criminal justice, which calculated the cost to house a person in jail for a year at more than \$81,000; and your consultant, ret. judge Sherill Ellsworth's recommendations. Please put the question of jail size on your next agenda and schedule a decisive vote so architects and planners, and the public, will have clearer direction from you about our County's long-term needs. There will be no impairment to public safety in setting a bed target

at 200 new or remodeled beds. Such a goal will save millions of dollars over the long term, and support the humane goal to quit jailing people who don't need to be there to protect our communities.

Thank you.