

Early Release From Prison to Community Corrections

You are governor of a state and are faced with a serious financial shortfall this year. An aide suggests that one way to get the state back into economic health is to release older incarcerated offenders to community corrections. Your other options include cutting school funding for K–12 and higher education, discontinuing the state’s “meals on wheels” for the elderly, and increasing taxes. The aide informs you that some of these older offenders committed violent crimes, including murder, while younger. However, the aide argues that research shows that older offenders have generally aged out of committing crime, so their release into the community is safe. Further, she tells you that older inmates are far more costly to the state since they have significantly more, and significantly more costly, health issues that the state is required by law to address.

Ultimately you decide to go forward with the plan to release these low-risk, high-cost inmates into

community corrections as it saves your state millions of dollars annually. Before this occurs, the local media catch wind and share with the public that violent predatory criminals are being released early into the community. The public’s response is very negative, and threats to remove you from office mount.

Think About It

This forces you to think deeply about many questions.

1. Do you allow the state to cut education and aid to the elderly and to increase taxes?
2. Or do you continue with your plan to release these inmates?
3. If you continue with your plan, how do you convince the public that this is a good policy?
4. What other policy options do you see?