



CCPOA Information Sheet

California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA)

The California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA) was founded in 1957. As of May 2011, the association represents 30,000 correctional peace officers, including prison guards and state parole agents. CCPOA's stated mission is to "promote and enhance the correctional profession, protect the safety of those engaged in corrections and advocate for the laws, funding and policies needed to improve prison operations and protect public safety" (CCPOA, 2011a).

Craig Brown is CCPOA's main legislative advocate. In May 2011, Brown was employed with Richard Robinson & Associates, Inc., a law firm that represents large professional firms including banks, insurance and utility companies (Robinson and Associates, 2011). Brown has worked in politics and legislative advocacy for over 24 years. Before joining Richard Robinson & Associates, Inc., he was California's Director of Finance. Earlier in his career, Brown worked for approximately 13 years as the undersecretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency during two Administrations, and as Director of the California Youth Authority. Brown has also worked for the California Legislative Analyst's Office and, in the early 1970s, as a budget officer in the United States Air Force. Among the clients listed by Richard Robinson and Associates in 2011 include American Correctional Solutions, California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), and California Statewide Law Enforcement Association (CSLEA, 2011).

Starting in the 1980's, CCPOA launched a campaign designed to increase their membership and political clout. The group successfully lobbied for the building of more correctional facilities and tougher sentencing laws. Over the next two decades California built 20 new prisons and more than quadrupled the prison population while adding many new guards to their membership.

Most of its long-term gains in political leverage have been due to consolidations of power. CCPOA reinvented itself during the 1980's when Don Novey became president of the organization and brought together the California State Employees' Association and the California Correctional Officers' Association. In 2010 following suit, the California Bail Agents Association and the Golden State Bail Agents Association are working together with some success due to recent public scrutiny of the private bail bonds system. Law enforcement groups have also secured legislative victories by partnering with victims' rights groups to wage public relations campaigns. While prison guards can appear as a less-than-sympathetic group in the public eye, the mother of a murdered child serves as a powerful tool when trying to strengthen punitive laws.

In 1994, CCPOA was instrumental in promoting Proposition 184 (the “Three Strikes” law), mandating that anyone convicted of three felonies serves twenty-five years to life in prison. The law also requires a doubling of the sentence for anyone convicted of a second felony. (Proposition 36, the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act of 2000, changed state law to allow qualifying defendants convicted of a non-violent drug possession offense to receive a probationary sentence on a third strike.)

In 2008, CCPOA led the charge against Proposition 5, an initiative to emphasize treatment over incarceration for non-violent drug offenders, donating more than any other organization to the Campaign for People Against the Proposition 5 Deception (in the amount of one million dollars, Follow the Money, 2010). At the same time, CCPOA publicly supported many of the individual sentencing reforms contained in the initiative.

By 2009, California’s correctional system held more than 156,000 inmates; approximately double its capacity. Federal Judges in San Francisco ordered California to reduce its prison population by 55,000 inmates or one third (Moore, 2009). CCPOA has vigorously opposed this ruling through lobbying efforts and by organizing protests with victim’s rights groups. The group gave Jerry Brown more money than any other candidate between 2006 and 2010, totaling \$63,000.

The California Fair Political Practices Commission (2010) report called *Big Money Talks*, in which they studied the top 15 spending special interest groups in California from 2000-2009, also examined the groups ranked from 16 to 25. CCPOA ranked at number 17. During this period of time the organization spent a total of \$32.5 million. The spending breakdown is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. CCPOA Lobbying, 2000-2009.

Issues	Money Spent (\$ millions)
Ballot Measures	\$9.8
Candidates	\$9.8
Political Parties	\$3.2
Other Campaign Committees	\$6.1
Total Spent to Influence Voters	\$28.9
Total Spent Lobbying Officials	\$3.6
Grand Total Spent	\$32.5

Source: California Fair Political Practices Commission, 2010.

The report goes into more detail, summarizing exactly what the money was spent on, as follows (p. 42):

- Spent nearly \$3.5 million in contributions to the Alliance for a Better California in 2005, which, in turn, used the money to oppose Propositions 74, 75, 76 and 78, while supporting Propositions 77, 79, and 80 on the 2005 special statewide election.

- Spent \$2,000,000 in contributions to the Alliance for California Renewal Committee, which, in turn, contributed money in opposition to Proposition 93 on the 2008 ballot. That measure sought to modify term limits for legislators.
- Spent \$1,140,000 in contributions to the Native Americans and Peace Officers committee, which, in turn, made “independent expenditures” on behalf of candidates and made contributions to political parties and other committees.
- Spent \$1,825,000 to oppose Proposition 5 on the 2008 ballot. That measure sought to limit court authority to incarcerate offenders who commit certain drug crimes. It lost 40.5% to 59.5%.
- Spent \$854,866 to oppose Proposition 66 on the 2004 ballot. That measure sought to enact some limitations on the “Three Strikes” law. It lost 47.3% to 52.7%.
- Gave \$1,766,310 to the Democratic Party and \$1,438,225 to the Republican Party.

Note the two areas above directly related to criminal justice, namely Propositions 5 and 66 (totaling about \$2.7 million). Both measures lost.

It should be noted that since 2002 CCPOA has begun to think in more progressive ways. As Daniel Macallair noted CCPOA’s strategy of supporting prison growth and harsh sentencing under the leadership of Don Novey,

...was fatally flawed, because it failed to take into account the state’s finite resources and the unwillingness of the electorate to finance unlimited prison expansion....Because of the sentencing laws that Novey vigorously promoted during his tenure, the California prison system now verges on the brink of collapse with conditions nearly unbearable for staff and inmates. Many fear that the present prison conditions make some form of calamity inevitable. Novey’s legacy sowed the seeds for the current crisis and the inability of the state’s political system to craft responsible policy (Macallair, 2010).

However, in 2002 new leadership emerged, with Mike Jimenez in charge of the union. Since then, CCPOA has supported sentencing reform which “not only promotes the interests of its members but also serves the best interests of the public.” CCPOA clearly recognized that a “prison system operating at nearly 200% of capacity creates dangerous working conditions that compromise the safety of everyone. While the union has succeeded in achieving good wages and job stability, it has come at the expense of working conditions. Clearly the challenge of the future for the CCPOA is to take a leadership role in repairing the damage of its past policies and creating a better working environment for both staff and inmates” (Macallair 2010).

On their website President Mike Jimenez noted this new direction, stating the issues in the starkest terms:

CALIFORNIA’S PRISON SYSTEM is failing at every level. The cost to taxpayers and public safety for this failure is staggering. More than 170,000 inmates are now being warehoused in facilities designed to accommodate 80,000 inmates. Coupled with severe staff shortages, this overcrowding is inordinately jeopardizing the safety of inmates and correctional officers, while straining prison

resources and infrastructure to the breaking point. Today, an average of nine correctional officers are assaulted every day inside California prisons, while tens of thousands of inmates are being denied the help and incentives needed to help make them productive citizens.

Inmate rehabilitation programs are failing, turning prison gates into revolving doors, giving California one of the nation's highest recidivism rates. Thousands of inmates who have served their sentences are being released without the education, job training or basic life skills needed to function in society. With few chances to succeed, they have little choice but to return to crime. California's parole policies are also failing. Parole officers are overworked and overwhelmed. Parolees are receiving neither the services nor support they need to find jobs, deal with substance abuse or resolve psychological issues. This is wasting their lives, bankrupting taxpayers and endangering public safety.

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Despite the state's efforts, California's prison system — and entire public safety infrastructure — remains in crisis. Overcrowding continues to be a major concern, not only to public safety officials, but also the federal courts. Per inmate costs continue to rise — as a result of court-ordered increases in inmate medical costs, as well as inefficient management. And planned rehabilitation programs have been scuttled due to the state's most recent fiscal crisis.

But failure is not an option — our corrections system must be reformed. As such, we recommend that the California Legislature dedicate 2010 to re-tooling AB 900 — to develop a sound analytical basis from which to build a safer, more efficient, cost-effective, and integrated corrections and rehabilitation system. Consistent with the Legislature's intent to date, we agree that these efforts should focus on six major areas (CCPOA, 2011b).

These areas include sentencing, assessments, rehabilitation, infrastructure, parole and juvenile justice. Details for each of these areas are provided on the website.

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