

Governor John Engler

Punk Prison Groundbreaking

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Baldwin

[prepared by Judy Palnau]

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Michigan's violent youth offenders.

It is Michigan's first private prison, and will be one of the nation's largest stand-alone youth correctional facilities.

Thank you, Wayne [Calabrese].

It's great to join you here today.

Ken McGinnis, the director of Michigan's Department of Corrections; Jim Truxton, president of the Baldwin Village Council; Charles Young, chairman of the Lake County Commissioners; Louise Russell, supervisor of Webber Township; and representatives from Wackenhut Corrections and Granger Construction are all here to break ground for Michigan's first "punk prison," a maximum security facility which will house Michigan's violent, youth offenders.

It is Michigan's first private prison, and will be one of the nation's largest, stand-alone youth correctional facilities.

Granger Construction of Lansing will build it, and Wackenhut Corrections will manage it.

Let me just say, that Wackenhut's reputation in corrections work is outstanding.

They run 32 state and federal facilities in the U.S. and overseas.

In addition, they provide the security for many of the nation's nuclear power and nuclear weapons facilities.

With that kind of background, I know Michigan is in good hands.

I am particularly pleased to be here in Baldwin today -- a day that I have been waiting for.

I called for this type of facility in my 1995 State of the State address and again in my 1996 address.

I noted then that it was high time to stop pampering punks who rape, murder, and assault law-abiding citizens.

And I called for "adult time for adult crime."

How serious is the problem?

Even though serious crime in Michigan is at a 27-year low, violent crime committed by juveniles continues to be a problem.

Listen to these statistics:

During the period from 1983 to 1993, the juvenile arrest rate for serious, violent index crimes increased 36 percent.

The murder rate for juveniles increased by 160 percent; aggravated assaults by 71 percent, and arson by 56 percent -- rates much higher than for adult perpetrators.

The system to deal with these young and violent offenders was designed for kids who stole hubcaps in the 1950s, not the murderers, rapists, armed robbers and drive-by shooters of the 90s.

I'm pleased to report that Michigan now has one of the toughest juvenile justice system in the nation.

This prison gives judges an additional sentencing option, it keeps young offenders segregated from the adult prison population and it sends a strong message to gang members and other violent young offenders that they will be severely punished.

When complete in 1999, this prison will have 480 beds.

And for Baldwin and Lake County, this prison will mean some 200 new, well-paying jobs.

For Michigan taxpayers, there's good news, too.

Construction-related savings are more than \$33 million, and at maximum capacity, this facility will save the Department of Corrections \$4.5 million per year in operating costs!

I like that!

This prison will save the taxpayers money while it keeps Michigan's most violent punks and thugs behind bars.

To give us his perspective, here's the director of Michigan's Department of Corrections -- Ken McGinnis . . .