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## A NEW APPROACH FOR INMATES

There are inmates who must be kept in prison due to the nature of their crimes. There are also non-violent inmates who could probably be released with proper supervision, monitoring, assistance, and programs. Our prison population is increasing, and a different approach to handling our offenders must be implemented. Eventually, the majority of offenders will be released into our society to integrate with us.

With little direction from the Lingle administration through her first term, the Legislature instituted a new approach this past session entailing re-entry programs and rehabilitation for our prison prepare our inmates and their families through innovative community-driven services and programs is the national trend today. Hawaii should embrace this model and become a leader in prison reform.

Senate Bill (SB) 932 is the beginning of this new approach and attitude. The Lingle Administration has concerns with the measure; however, interim director Clayton Frank should use this bill as an opportunity to turn Hawaii's prison system around by emphasizing treatment and rehabilitation for those inmates who would benefit. Hard core criminals will still be confined, but where more successful, inexpensive approaches are possible, we must change our way of thinking to help those who can be rehabilitated.

The Legislature understands the State's cautious view. But the Department of Public Safety (DPS) is in a position to implement a progressive approach to dealing with our inmate population, and it should plan and design the proposed prison in Puunene, Maui based on this new approach. I know there are unions, businesses, community-based, faith-based, and culturally sensitive programs which would be willing to work with our state to deal with our prison population. Current efforts are on-going, and more needs to be done.

The return of prisoners from the mainland is inevitable. The DPS must implement an innovative plan which incorporates SB 932 in this process. Now is not the time to say it

cannot be done; the interim director must say it can be done and here's how we will do it. Action is now needed on SB 932, not excuses. Your Legislature is watching and willing to assist where needed. The public safety of our community is also our top priority.

Will Espero, Chair  
Senate Public Safety Committee

*(You can reach my office by telephone at 586-6360, fax at 586-6361, or e-mail at [senespero@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:senespero@capitol.hawaii.gov). I represent Ewa through lower Waipahu.)*