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The Contra Costa Sheriff's West County Detention Facility in Richmond.

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## Sen. Nancy Skinner Asks Contra Costa Supervisors to Cancel \$95 Million Jail Expansion

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State Sen. Nancy Skinner sent [a letter](#) to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors today urging them to reverse plans for an expensive jail expansion in Richmond.

The supervisors [voted in February](#) to approve growing the West County Detention Facility. The plan costs \$25 million in county funds and relies on another \$70 million from the state. The county would have to pay an additional \$5 million annually to operate the jail.

Critics say increasing the jail's capacity is unnecessary, and that many of the people incarcerated by the Contra Costa Sheriff are nonviolent offenders who haven't been convicted of a crime. They simply can't afford bail and are awaiting court.

Sheriff David Livingston also contracts with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency to house federal immigration detainees at the Richmond jail.

"We are at a point in California's history of rethinking past criminal justice policies that too quickly resorted to incarceration with little to no focus on crime prevention, community impact, or rehabilitation," wrote Skinner in her letter.

According to Skinner, pending legislation like SB10, which would end the money bail system, is set to drastically reduce the number of people locked up in county jails, making expensive capital projects unnecessary.

Supervisor John Gioia was the sole vote against the jail expansion.

Supporters of the expansion say that it doesn't actually add to the number of beds in the county. Rather, it would involve building a new wing in Richmond and transferring over 400 inmates from the Martinez jail, which was built in 1978 and is overcrowded.

Sheriff Livingston has said the new facility will allow his department to offer inmates more services like mental health care.

But opponents say the Sheriff should end his contract with immigration authorities and release more nonviolent offenders to make room for inmates and programs to serve them.

Skinner's opposition is a significant boost to those resisting the jail expansion. Previously, the Richmond City Council voted against the project.

Contra Costa County officials also are planning on building a new administration building for the sheriff which will be located in Martinez.