

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2003

November 17, 2003

Honorable John Ashcroft
United States Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Ashcroft:

We are adamantly opposed to placing a privately run maximum security detention center in any Maryland community that does not want it. We specifically request that four Maryland sites currently under review by the Office of the Federal Detention Trustee be immediately withdrawn from consideration.

None of these sites were cleared with the local community. The four potential sites announced last week are in highly populated neighborhoods with schools, parks, shopping centers, and businesses in the immediate surrounding areas. There is no rational justification for placing a 1,750 bed maximum security detention center housing dangerous criminals in these neighborhoods.

We are especially troubled that these objectionable and ill-conceived plans were hidden from the local jurisdictions until recently. Waiting until after the four sites were selected to inform local jurisdictions and community residents is absolutely unacceptable. There may be communities and locations that would accept such a facility and be appropriate for its siting. However, none of the four sites currently being considered meet either of those criteria.

In addition, we oppose the Office of The Federal Detention Trustee's plans to turn a maximum security detention center over to a private contractor. Previously, such arrangements have often signaled a sweetheart deal that comes at the expense of the community and tax payer. In a post-September 11 world, privatizing a facility that may house dangerous terrorists is irresponsible. Private businesses are focused primarily on the bottom line, rather than the safety and well being of the surrounding communities.

We ask that you immediately withdraw the currently identified four communities from consideration. The siting of a maximum security detention facility must be well thought through and carefully considered with full community participation from the outset.

Please notify us promptly of your intentions in this regard.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator



Paul Sarbanes
United States Senator

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