difficult to put into place, but the fact that
they're necessary indicates both the scope of the
threat to female prisoners from male officers and
the appeal of the blanket prohibition on male
officers holding contact positions in female
institutions.

Thanks.

CHAIRMAN WALTON: Thank you very much for
your testimony.

Mr. Lowry.

MR. BRYAN LOWRY: Thank you, sir.

My name's Bryan Lowry. First, I would like
to thank the Commission for the opportunity to come
here and testify today.

I'm the current president of the Council of
Prison Locals, which represents 104 locals
throughout the United States in every federal
prison. We're affiliated with the American
Federation of Government Employees.

We have approximately 19,000 dues-paying
members throughout every federal prison or facility,
that actually belongs to our union. We are 70
percent organized as a prison council, which means
that of all the bargaining unit employees that are
employed by the Bureau of Prisons, 70 percent are
dues-paying union members. We have approximately over 30,000 employees that work for the Bureau of Prisons.

Our organization does not condone any type or any instance of assault by inmate on staff or inmate alike. It is the Council of Prison Locals' position through negotiations of collective bargaining agreements, local supplemental agreements, memorandums of understanding, or any forms of bargaining to always reduce the inherent hazards of the correctional environment for both staff and inmates. Not only for the sake of staff, but inmates as well.

Our organization promotes a safe and secure environment. Our belief is that all inmates should be treated fairly in accordance with all provisions of the law as well as in accordance with all prescribed policies that are put in place by the Bureau of Prisons.

Bureau of Prisons has recently, within the last two years, eliminated 2300 paid positions of employees, which has greatly decreased the number of staff presence inside our institutions, which also has eliminated positions.

The Bureau of Prisons two years ago and
prior to the last -- or within the last 20 years had
a policy in place that said one correctional officer
for every pod, wing, or cube. Two years ago the
Bureau of Prisons did a restructuring effort and in
every low and medium security level prison they
reduced the number of correctional officers per
housing unit.

In other words, a housing unit that was
rated to hold 125 to 150 inmates, which actually
holds about 150 to a hundred inmates. On day watch
shift, which is 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 in the afternoon,
you have one officer working two housing units. In
other words, one staff member, one correctional
officer responsible for overseeing 300-plus inmates.

The same practice occurs from midnight to
about 7:00 a.m. every night inside these prisons,
where two years ago and before you had one staff
member in each housing unit watching one staff to
about 150 to 170 inmates.

And now they're having to watch 300
inmates, which means they're having to leave the
housing units to go to another housing unit and make
rounds all night long. Which means it takes time to
make your rounds, to do your paperwork, to follow
the policies that are prescribed with the
reorganization that they've done.

   It's decreased the amount of presence that
we have not only on our compound to ensure that the
inmates are conducting theirselves in a proper
manner or obeying the policies, but it also is the
prevalence inside the units and decreases the amount
of responders should an emergency happen where staff
has to respond to any type of assault or activity
inside the prisons.

   Training opportunities in the Bureau of
Prisons. I want to touch on that briefly.

   I think the policies that are in place in
the Bureau of Prisons are sufficient. However,
because of the decreased staffing, which goes in
hand with annual leave that staff takes, sick leave
that comes into play, people transferring,
promoting, leaving, you're actually only staffing --
we're staffing the prisons now at about 90 percent.
That's been testified to and from the Science,
State, Justice, and Commerce Committee with Chairman
Wolf by the director, Harley Lappin.

   With that said, our reorganization was
called Mission Critical. Positions that they
identified critical to the mission to operate a
prison on every day, 24 hours a day, seven days a
week in most prisons are being vacated every single day, which takes the presence of our staff out of there and makes the prisons more dangerous not only for inmates, but the staff who work in there as well.

They have changed how they rate inmates that go to different security levels. In other words, when an inmate comes in to an institution, they go and team the inmate. They determine his point level to determine what security level of prison that inmate's going to go to.

They have changed these levels where more aggressive inmates have now dropped down to a medium security level prison instead of being in a higher secure prison. And the problem is we have more staff presence in a higher security level than we do a medium.

But these inmates, because we only have so many prisons and we're already overrated capacity in every single prison with bed space, then the numbers are reducing down.

If you look, we have approximately 122 facility institutions within the structure of the Bureau of Prisons. With that said, the majority of our institutions are a medium security level; low
security level coming in second; and then
penitentiary, high security level, will be third.

We did have two administration facilities
which were considered supermax prisons, one being
Florence, Colorado, which has received a lot of
media lately because of their understaffing; and
number two was Marion, Illinois, which has been
around for probably 60 years.

If you don't know, Marion recently reduced
itself to a medium security level, so now we only
have one admax supermax prison within the structure
of the Bureau of Prisons.

UNICOR. UNICOR is an operation that is
self-sustaining. Of course, UNICOR, we believe, is
the backbone of our institutions. It is a factory
that's self-sufficient, that sells a product to
government agencies.

UNICOR has been under attack. Almost every
institution that has 1500 inmates or above usually
employs anywhere from 300 to 400 inmates in that
factory. We believe with UNICOR's assistance in
being able to do this, that it keeps all the
aggression down from the inmates who work in there.

They cannot maintain a job in there or the
amount of money that they're getting paid, which is
only about a dollar an hour, but it's more than 15
cents an hour for sweeping the sidewalk, and it
keeps these inmates more of a model-type inmate with
less aggression to stay out of trouble.

These inmates use that money to pay
restitution. They use the money to buy telephone
time to talk to their loved ones. They also use
that money to be able to send out, if they're not
paying restitution, like a child support to their
family.

Any loss from that program is a great loss
to the security of every single institution in the
Federal Bureau of Prisons.

I would also like to say that the Bureau of
Prisons has a program review that takes place in
every institution about every three years, unless
they get a deficient rating.

Program review guidelines in the last two
years, because of reorganization structure, the
Bureau of Prisons has been decreased. In other
words, policies that are currently in place in the
Bureau of Prisons that keep our prisons safe and in
an orderly running fashion are now overlooked. They
are not followed, they are not written up, and the
Bureau of Prisons does nothing about it.
The union has raised these issues to management saying that this is making our prisons more dangerous to not only to staff, but the inmates as well.

My organization's goal is to educate the public on the dangerous situation the Bureau of Prisons has fell into. With the increase in the assault ratio as determined by the Office of Inspector General, we have insight to the increased aggression that we attribute to the decreasing in staffing levels. We have had more serious assaults on staff and inmates alike in the last year than ever before.

There have been more inmates shot -- not only shot at, but shot from towers in this year, '06, than any other time in the history of the Bureau of Prisons.

Approximately two months ago in Big Sandy, a United States penitentiary, within the same month two inmates were murdered by other inmates, homicides happening in the prisons.

And yet there has been a warden removed, but that warden's still employed. And the fact of the matter is, is that prison hasn't come under control.
Now I'm going to let my colleague, Mr. Ortiz, who actually is a local president over a federal complex which has three or four different security level of inmates there, go into that much further.

But with the decreasing in staffing that's going on because we're not being properly budgeted and we're being underfunded somewhere between 3- and 500 million a year, although our budget for the Bureau of Prisons is about 4 billion a year, that is causing us to have a decrease in our staffing level.

It is changing our policies. It is changing the way we conduct business. And we believe it is reducing our ability to supervise these inmates, control contraband, control drugs and everything else that can go wrong inside of a prison.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WALTON: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Ortiz.

MR. ISAAC ORTIZ: Good afternoon.

Isaac Ortiz, local president, Beaumont, Texas.

As he was saying, I represent a complex that entails a United States penitentiary, medium