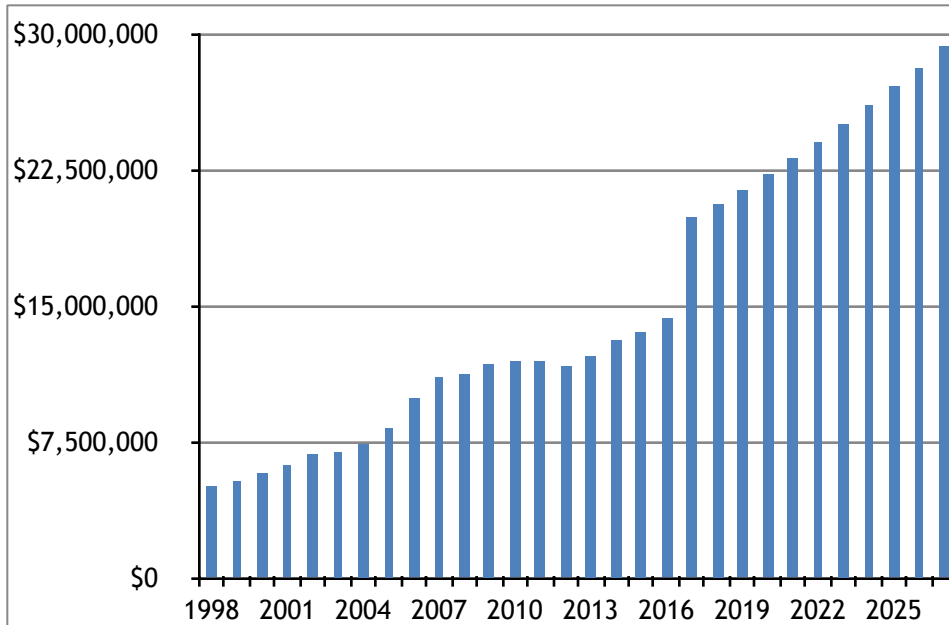


## Just Say No - to the Incarceration-Industrial Complex

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Annual Incarceration Costs  
Whatcom County

**Key data** to help you make your decision on the county's proposal to borrow **\$97 million to build a new jail**:

Amount borrowed: \$ 97,000,000

Annual Interest Cost: \$ 4,850,000 (Based on 5% coupon)

Total Interest Cost Over Bond Term: \$ 145,000,000 (30-year term)

Total Whatcom County Incarceration Expense:

1998 (actual): \$ 4,996,850

2015 (budget): \$ 13,637,274

Avg. Annual Whatcom County Incarceration Expense Increase, 1998 to 2015: **6.1%**

Avg. Annual Consumer Price Index Inflation, 1998 to 2015: **2.8%**

Projection 1: Annual Incarceration Expense, 2027: **\$ 24,300,000**

(Including bond interest and inflation of 3%)

Projection 2: Using inflation at the rate the county has been increasing incarceration costs 1998-2015(6.1%) gives Total Annual Projected Incarceration Expense 2027: **\$29,340,000**

Graphically, the county's proposal under projection 2 is shown above.

# Just Say No - to the Incarceration-Industrial Complex

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## **Commentary:**

I've spent my 30-year career as a plant, division, and business unit controller. Evaluating capital projects was about 25% of my job. Rarely have I seen such an extreme case of attempted fiscal misappropriation as the current proposal for a new jail. If the sheriff and executive and County Council have their way, this thing could bankrupt the county. It is really that bad.

Since 1998, the county's incarceration expense has increased at over twice the rate of inflation. Now, the county is proposing to continue increasing this expense by locking us into a massive expansion in capital cost and attendant facility and transportation costs. They propose to finance this new jail with a tax increase that uses 100% of the available taxing authority for Public Health and Safety – leaving precisely zero for fire, EMS, emergency preparedness, addiction counseling, or public health nurses – it will all go to building up the incarceration-industrial complex in our County.

The remaining hurdle is that they need to get voter approval for the tax increase. But when you look at the numbers, the new jail just doesn't pencil out. And it doesn't appear the county has made any attempt to reduce costs, or even explain why incarceration costs have increased so much relative to inflation. Rather, they have signed a \$7.1 million contract with an out-of-state consultant (DLR) to design a Cadillac jail. They have purchased land behind RDS recyclers on Labounty Road for \$6.1 million, which appears to be about four times the assessed value.

Where is the need? Crime rates are down in Whatcom County (see graph below). In 1998, there were 148 violent crimes and 2,113 property crimes, for a total of 2,261 crimes. In 2012 (the last year data is available on the FBI website), there were 158 violent crimes and 1,130 property crimes, for a total of 1,288 crimes. That's a decrease of over 43%. Yet during that same period, the county increased its annual incarceration expense from \$4.997 million to \$11.685 million, a 234% increase. We already have a problem with runaway costs and it appears the county plans to double down on this trend. For the next 30 years, the county plans to spend as much on annual bond interest as our entire cost of incarceration in 1998 – just under \$5 million per year.

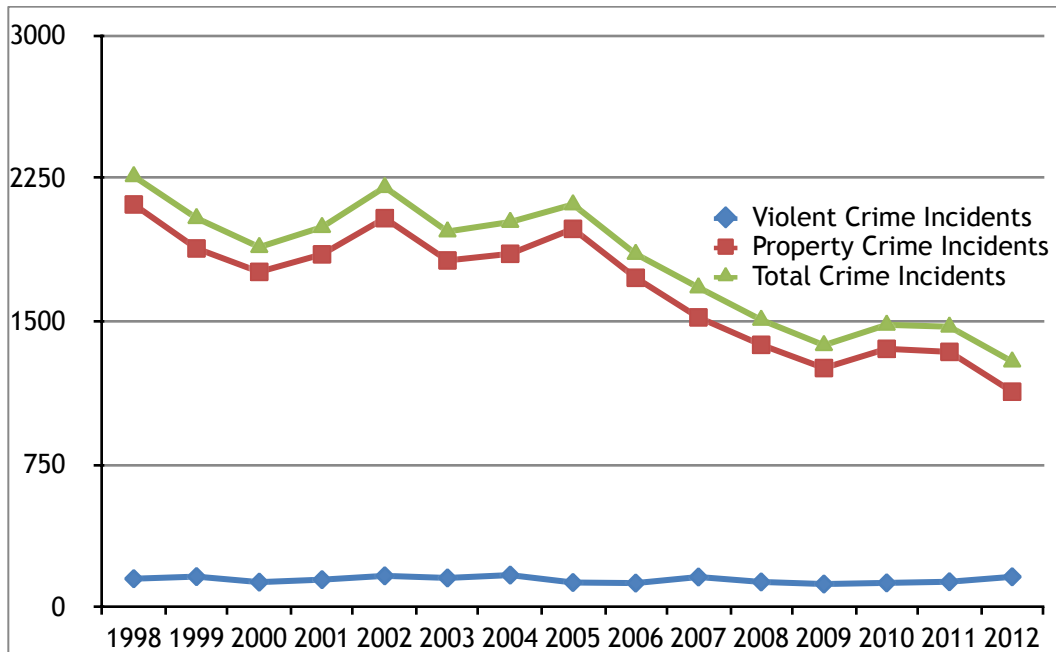
The county is trying to justify a new jail because the old jail is unsafe. What happened to all the money we have been providing for upkeep? Why wasn't the old jail properly maintained? Why should we give more money to the sheriff and the county administration when they appear to be spending it so imprudently?

Vote no.

# Just Say No - to the Incarceration-Industrial Complex

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Whatcom Cty Violent and Property Crimes



Sources:

Financial Data: Whatcom County Finance Dept.  
Audited Annual Reports 1998-2013; Budgets for 2014 and 2015.  
Link: <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/Archive.aspx?AMID=37>

Jail Proposal from Whatcom County New Jail Facility Use Agreement  
Link: <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/1966/New-Jail-Facility-Use-Agreement>

Crime Statistics: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics  
Link: <http://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/Local/RunCrimeJurisbyJuris.cfm>

Jail Planning and Contract Information: Whatcom County Executive “New Jail Information”  
Link: <http://wa-whatcomcounty.civicplus.com/446/New-Jail-Information>

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Underlying Projections available in tabular form on request.

This article has also been published online at NWCitizen.com – Please visit and comment!

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