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Expensive prison fix could complicate budget process

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By Michael Doudna, Reporter [CONNECT](#)

MONTGOMERY, AL (WSFA) - Lawmakers soon may have to find a way to pay for more staffing for the state prison system.

Alabama's Department of Corrections is currently under litigation and trying to find a solution to its mental health care, which a federal judge called "grossly inadequate" earlier this year.

Both mental health and correction staffing were named as overarching issues by Judge Myron Thompson. Since the judge's ruling, both the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Alabama DOC have floated proposals. While varying vastly on the number of staffing, both plans said the Alabama DOC needed to hire more workers and the cost would be in the millions.

Sen. Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, said he projected the total cost for new employees to be around \$30-40 million.

Both the House General Fund Budget Chair, Rep. Steve Clouse, R-Ozark, and the Senate Budget Chair Sen. Tripp Pittman R-Baldwin, said raising taxes was unlikely in next years legislative session.

Lawmakers rarely raise taxes in an election year.

Another potential option to raise the needed revenue would be to move the money around. Likely cutting other agencies to help pay for a corrections funding increase.

The state does have \$93 million carried over from last years budget to help with additional costs. However most of that money is expected to go towards Medicaid costs.

Lawmakers return for next year's session in January.

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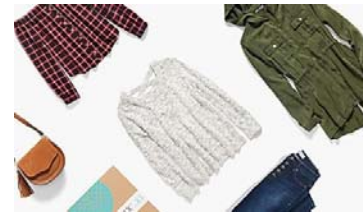
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