

Brown's prison plan doesn't consider overcrowded county jails

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown's plan to transfer state inmates to county jails faces a simple obstacle: Many jails don't have the space to hold them.

Just as the state has struggled with prison overcrowding, some counties have had their own problems keeping inmates locked up. Statewide, tens of thousands of inmates are released early from county jails each year because of space constraints.

Jail crowding was on the minds of many sheriffs when Brown announced in his budget proposal last week his plan to give them responsibility for more than 40,000 lower-level offenders and parole violators.

"We don't have the space," said Sacramento County Sheriff Scott Jones, who once ran the county's two jails. "The Main Jail is full or over-full every day."

If Brown's plan is approved, Jones and other sheriffs say, they would have to release inmates early to make room for state prisoners.

Administration officials say they are still working on the plan and hope to come up with ways of helping counties with limited jail space. One option would be through AB 900, which authorized \$7.4 billion in bonds for jail construction and rehabilitation projects four years ago.

Jails in 20 counties – including Sacramento, Placer, Yolo and El Dorado – are under court orders to release inmates when they become too crowded. Jails in the four counties often

operate at or near capacity.

Read the whole story