



PATRICK "PAT" LABAT
FULTON COUNTY SHERIFF

FULTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
185 SHIRLEY C. FRANKLIN BLVD., S. W. 9TH FLOOR
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303
(404) 612-5100

WWW.FCSOGA.ORG

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Contact Information: FCSO.Communications@fultoncountyga.gov

**Statement from Sheriff Patrick Labat Following the Fulton County Board of
Commissioner's Vote to Spend \$1.2 billion to Construct a Special Purpose Facility and
Renovate the Rice Street Jail**

Yesterday's vote by four members of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners (BOC) to spend a billion dollars to build a special purpose facility is the equivalent to being in a burning building and voting to design a new fire station that will not open for five years. The vote is a political game of smoke and mirrors that flies in the face of the federal consent decree.

Decades since its opening, the Fulton County Rice Street Jail has shown signs of needing replacement starting with the fact it was originally designed and built for single bunking. Before its first day of operation in 1989, it needed to be double bunked to accommodate the growing inmate population. The failing infrastructure is a long-standing problem attributed to the demand put on a system far beyond its designed capacity, from the critically failing pipes that continuously burst and leak, a foundation that consistently floods when it rains, locks that do not work properly, to an outdated HVAC system that span across three federal consent decrees.

The Chairman and three of the BOC members are intentionally NOT addressing the immediate needs of the Fulton County Sheriff's Office and delaying the needs of the inmates in our care and custody until the year 2030. The BOC's failure to act continues to put Fulton County taxpayers at risk of spending billions of dollars on lawsuits, higher construction costs, and higher taxes. This short-sighted thinking is a shining example of people who cannot, and will not, admit they were wrong. They were wrong to turn a blind eye to the need for a new jail facility. They were wrong to abandon the recommendation of experts they commissioned and paid \$2 million to tell them what anyone can see for free and they are wrong for now trying to create an ultimate universe where we don't see them attempting to build a portion of the same jail, piece by piece, without adequately addressing the needs of the current Rice Street facility. It is clear their personal agendas and political grievances are being prioritized over public safety and human dignity.

It is extremely shameful that the BOC's deliberate indifference will continue to put both our Fulton County Sheriff's Office staff and inmates directly in harm's way!

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