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CONTACT: Deborah Lynch
Communications Officer
(916) 651-6452
deborah.lynch@library.ca.gov

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California State Library grant provides books for California prisons

SACRAMENTO – The California State Library has awarded the Southern California Library Cooperative (SCLC) a grant for \$371,000 to provide text books and recreational reading materials to California Prisons. These funds provided through the Library Services Training Act (LSTA), are being granted to support an important need - new materials and textbooks in prison libraries. The monies granted are being used to furnish textbooks to three California prisons. These include adult prisons San Quentin and Ironwood and juvenile prison, the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility. Recreational reading materials are being sent to all California prisons.

The textbooks provided for the adult prisons will be used to give inmates more resources to complete classes at community colleges. At Ventura's Youth Correctional Facility, juvenile offenders will get textbooks to help them complete their high school diplomas. The recreational reading materials, going to all 33 prisons in California, include magazines, newspapers, and fiction and non-fiction books.

According to SCLC Executive Director Rosario Garza, the grant's administrator, this program has been "one of the most rewarding projects I've worked on with the State Library. It's meeting a desperate need and the staff is very appreciative because this allows more people to be able to take classes." Tom Bolema, a teacher with VEP, the Voluntary Education Program at San Quentin, says "the books have made the program." Although he coordinates learning activities for inmates for both high school and community college, the college program has no money in the budget for textbooks. Inmates have had to buy their own, but many inmates do not have financial resources to do so. So this grant is just what they need. Bolema has been able to purchase 10 textbooks for each of the classes for two community college programs that inmates at San Quentin participate in.

Studies show that inmates who participate in prison education programs like this have lower recidivism rates than non-participants. Inmates who use prison libraries have higher literacy rates than those who don't. According to Bolema, education and literacy are the keys to lower re-offense rates in about 70% of the prison population. It gives them the tools necessary to help them be successful once they're back in mainstream society.

The [Library Services and Technology Act \(LSTA\)](#) is a federal grant program that is managed by the [Institute of Museum and Library Services \(IMLS\)](#) and administered in California by the State Librarian.

About the State Library: Founded in 1850, the California State Library is the central reference and research library for the Governor's office, legislature, state employees, and the general public. The State Library administers federal and state grants for programs in historical preservation, library construction, civil liberties education, literacy, volunteering, and broadband connectivity in public libraries. For more information, visit www.library.ca.gov.

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