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Economic Impact Expected to Generate More Than 1,100 Jobs, More Than $200 Million in Annual Local Investment

THOMSON, IL– October 2, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn and Senator Dick Durbin today announced that the Obama administration and the Federal Bureau of Prisons will purchase the underutilized, state-of-the-art maximum security Thomson Correctional Center to house federal criminal offenders. More than 1,100 jobs are expected to be generated once the facility is fully operational.

“This is excellent news that will create more than 1,100 jobs in northwestern Illinois and provide relief to taxpayers across the state who will no longer be forced to pay for an empty, unnecessary facility,” Governor Quinn said. “I want to thank President Obama and Senator Durbin for their strong support throughout this process. We look forward to Thomson being a fully operational facility that will drive major economic growth in the region in the near future.”

“At the direction of President Obama, the Department of Justice, on behalf of the federal Bureau of Prisons, filed paperwork today in the federal courthouse in Rockford, to finalize the $165 million transfer of Thomson to the federal system,” said Senator Durbin. “This historic action will lead to the creation of hundreds of construction jobs and over 1,000 permanent jobs at this federal facility. After facing a political standoff in the House of Representatives, I went directly to the President and asked him to take this action. The President knows the Quad Cities and the critical need for good-paying jobs in this part of the state. I want to thank Mayor Hebeler and the people of Thomson. This was his idea and they've patiently waited for over a decade for this day to come. This Mayor never gave up – I have the voice mails to prove it.”

The Department of Justice, on behalf of the federal Bureau of Prisons, today filed documents in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois in Rockford to acquire Thomson Correctional Center at a price of $165 million, which falls between two federal appraisals. This court-guided process will benefit the taxpayers of Illinois, while ensuring that the facility is used appropriately. The cost of building the prison was $128.8 million. If the prison had continued to sit empty, it would cost the state more than $800,000 annually, and $60 million annually if it were to operate at full capacity.

The federal government’s operation of Thomson will provide a major boost to the local

economy and create more than 1,100 jobs. Annual operation of the facility is expected to generate more than $122 million in operating expenditures (including salaries), $19 million in labor income, and $61 million in local business sales.

The Thomson facility was built in 2001 by the State of Illinois as a state-of-the-art, maximum-security prison to house the most severe criminal offenders. The bulk of the facility was never occupied, however, and is sitting vacant. The facility was constructed on a 146-acre piece of land and has 1,600 beds with eight compartmentalized units designed for maximum inmate supervision and control. The facility is enclosed by a 12-foot exterior fence and 15-foot interior fence, which includes a dual sided electric stun fence.

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