

Allouez village president says Green Bay prison a 'powder keg,' presses for closure

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Allouez Village President Jim Rafter says Green Bay Correctional Institution is a "powder keg waiting to blow" as he intensifies his push to lawmakers and Gov. Tony Evers to close the prison.

"I'm really concerned as village president for the safety of our community," Rafter told WISN's "UpFront," which is produced in partnership with WisPolitics. "If things blow up inside GBCI, they're going to spill over into our community, and I don't want to sound a big horn, but that's true. There's an opportunity for that. And I would not want to be a state leader and have that on my hands."

Evers and the Department of Corrections recently announced a number of moves at Green Bay and Waupun meant to ease overcrowding as both face numerous challenges, including prison conditions, staff shortages and outcry from families.

"It doesn't go far enough," Rafter said. "I'm glad the governor is acknowledging we have a big problem at GBCI, but the only way to really fix that is to have complete closure of the facility."

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At Green Bay Correctional, recent data shows the prison is housing 979 inmates, about 230 over capacity. The facility has 95 openings for correctional officers and sergeants, a 41% vacancy rate.

Rafter said he also is exploring plans to develop the land if the prison were to close. A 2021 study commissioned by the village estimated about \$154 million annually in new economic impact if the land were redeveloped.

“While we started out with that, and that’s still a great interest of ours, what we’ve learned over the last eight years about what’s going on in there and in talking to staff and talking to guards and talking to the community, it’s a terrible place that really has to be closed,” Rafter said.

In another segment, Bob Woodward, the legendary journalist and associate editor at The Washington Post, says “anything” can still happen in 2024, even as it appears more likely voters in Wisconsin and nationwide will be faced with a Trump-Biden rematch.

“You never can never tell,” Woodward told “UpFront.” “Somebody in the Biden White House said well it may not be Trump versus Biden but X versus Y. I don’t know who X and Y might be, but that’s possible.”

“I happen to be 80 also,” Woodward said, referring to the ages of Joe Biden and Donald Trump. “And 80’s not 37 or 47 or 57 or 67, and the presidency is hard.”

Woodward is currently working on a new book that will focus on Ukraine, the Middle East, the presidential campaigns and Biden.

“The similarities between Trump and Nixon are immense. They’re different, but there are a lot of similarities,” Woodward said. “One of the themes is political hate that Nixon embodied. Trump has embodied (that) and we now see it on an international scale in the Middle East and Ukraine. Political hate is driving a lot, too much. It’s crippling.”

Last year, Woodward released “The Trump Tapes,” an audiobook featuring his 20 interviews with Trump in 2019 and 2020, partially during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and ahead of the 2020 election.

“We would be at home that year and the phone would ring,” Woodward said. “And we would think, is it one of our two daughters? Is it a friend? Is it a robocall? Or is it Donald Trump? And it would often be Donald Trump.”

Trump is suing Woodward over the release of the tapes arguing the interviews were released without his permission. Woodward and his attorneys are asking the suit to be dismissed.

See more from the show [here](#).