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OPINION

Send the money where it's needed

Over the last few years, New York's four "shock" prison camps have saved the state hundreds of millions of dollars, according to the state's own Department of Corrections.

And, over the next few years, New York state and city have agreed to spend hundreds of millions of dollars helping the New York Yankees and the New York Mets.

So, when it came time to trim money from the budget, Gov. Paterson cut funding for the Moriah shock camp (of course).

If you want to pay \$300 to take your family to a ballgame, the state will help by spending tax dollars on a road for you to drive on and a lot for you to park in. If you want the state to keep open a successful prison work and rehabilitation program that has benefitted one of the poorest regions of New York, well ... move to another state.

It's sickening to watch New York hand cash to the owners of sports teams because:

1. The state is broke;
2. We're paying the bill;
3. Critical public institutions, like prisons and schools, need the money.

In 1987, Moriah became the first place in the state to be named a rural economic development zone. It qualified because of its endemic poverty.

That same year, the state took over the property where it would build Moriah Shock. Inmates spend less time at shock camps than they would at other prisons, and they do better afterward. Consequently, the camps save taxpayers money.

Even if the state no longer needs four shock camps, Moriah is the wrong one to close. No place needs those jobs as much as Moriah does.

Even the Adirondack Council, which is located in nearby Elizabethtown and advocates for the protection of the Adirondack wilderness, supports Moriah Shock's continued operation.

The program Moriah qualified for in 1987 grew into the bloated joke known as the Empire Zones.

It would be ironic, except that it's not surprising, that a program begun to help poor regions like Moriah ended up funneling cash to places like Queensbury and businesses like The Great Escape.

The twisting of the Empire Zones to corporate ends, at taxpayers' expense, is part of a pattern that goes beyond giveaways to sports teams and extends to thousands of corporate tax breaks and cash handouts flowing from all levels of government.

With Paterson's budget cutting money for public institutions like prisons and schools, while shunting cash to private corporations like the Yankees and the Mets, that pattern is continuing.

Will Doolittle is projects editor of The Post-Star. He may be reached at will@poststar.com.