

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON REHABILITATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
AND SENATE COMMITTEE ON RULES**

**Joint Committee to Study Staffing Levels and  
Employment Conditions at the Department of Corrections (SR 34, 2014)**

Tuesday, October 21, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.  
General Assembly Building  
Richmond, Virginia

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**I. Introduction & Opening Remarks**

Senator Dave W. Marsden called the meeting to order and the Joint Committee members introduced themselves.<sup>1</sup>

**II. Presentation: Department of Corrections' Budget & Operating Expenses - Paul Broughton, Director of Human Resources, Department of Corrections (DOC)**

Paul Broughton gave a PowerPoint presentation about DOC's current budget and expenses. Mr. Broughton testified that DOC continues to begin each year with a shortfall of approximately \$32,000,000, which is equivalent to approximately 600 correctional officer positions. Nevertheless, Mr. Broughton explained that due to the Commonwealth's current revenue shortages, DOC was tasked with developing savings strategies to address funding shortfalls of \$42,999,615 for fiscal year 2015 and \$60,388,365 for fiscal year 2016. In response, DOC will close the Cold Springs Work Center, delay opening the Culpepper Correctional Center for Women, close the Powhatan Main Correctional Center, close the White Post Diversion Center, abolish 10 DOC positions, eliminate equipment funding for fiscal year 2015, hold approximately \$3,000,000 in additional position vacancies, delay filling 20 new correctional officer positions, and delay filling 9 new sex offender monitoring positions. Mr. Broughton noted that DOC has been the subject of many budget cuts since 2001.

Next, Mr. Broughton testified that salaries for correctional officers are low and have not increased in coordination with inflation and cost-of-living, which has led to a current turnover rate of 16.98% because many correctional officers leave DOC after one year for higher paying jobs. Broughton testified that the average starting salary for correctional officers is \$28,035, which is 13.1% lower than the average starting salary for officers in regional jails, 29% lower than the minimum starting salary for officers with the Virginia State Police, and 30% lower than the average starting salary for other Richmond-area law enforcement officers. Mr. Broughton opined that salary increases will help lower the turnover rate for correctional officers.

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<sup>1</sup> The following Joint Committee members were present: Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr. (Co-Chairman), Senator Dave W. Marsden (Co-Chairman), Senator Kenneth C. Alexander, Donald Baylor, Steve Morris, Senator Linda T. Puller, Sheriff Kenneth W. Stolle, and Senator Jennifer T. Wexton. The following Joint Committee members were absent: Joey O'Quinn.

Finally, Mr. Broughton made the following recommendations for salary increases: (1) 3% increase to the minimum security staff salaries; (2) additional 1% salary increase for all security staff with more than five years of experience; (3) increase by 3-4% the salaries of correctional officers, correctional officer seniors, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and majors based on length of service (cost: \$11,350,000); and (4) create a new "Master Corrections Officer" level (cost of \$11,800,000 over a three-year implementation period: \$2,600,000 in year one, \$3,900,000 in year two, and \$5,300,000 in year three).

### **III. Tonya Vincent, Deputy Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security**

Tonya Vincent, appointed Deputy Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security by Governor Terry McAuliffe in January 2014, appeared before the Joint Committee primarily to answer questions posed by the members. Deputy Secretary Vincent testified that she has been working with Harold W. Clarke, Director of DOC, on the current budget issues. Deputy Secretary Vincent described their task of searching for cuts as a "challenging environment." Deputy Secretary Vincent noted that many of the issues DOC is facing are proving problematic in the Department of Juvenile Justice as well, including inadequate staffing levels and low salaries. Upon inquiry by Sheriff Stolle, Deputy Secretary Vincent noted that re-entry programs consume only a small portion of DOC's budget. Mr. Morris commented that DOC currently has many correctional officer vacancies that need to be filled for safety reasons. In response, Deputy Secretary Vincent stated that they are working on getting correctional officers "where they need to be."

### **IV. Public Comment**

Two former DOC employees testified about their experiences with DOC. The first testified that the work environment for correctional officers is very stressful, describing it as "extreme" and noting that, based on statistics, the rate of post-traumatic stress disorder for correctional officers is higher than the rate for veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He opined that this problem is further compounded by inadequate staffing levels.

Another former correctional officer at DOC testified that DOC's grievance procedure upon firing employees is unsatisfactory, describing it as a "buddy-buddy" system. He testified that supervisors are not following DOC's guidelines and have too much control regarding the filing of reports related to alleged employee misconduct. He recommended that DOC focus on remedying the issues related to its grievance system and that it ensure proper procedures are followed.

### **V. Discussion**

The meeting continued with discussion of topics for future review. Sheriff Stolle stated he would like to explore the cuts DOC intends to make in response to current budget constraints and compare the Commonwealth's DOC budget cuts to any cuts that have been made to departments of correction in other states. Senator Hanger also commented that the Joint Committee needs additional discussion regarding the revised budget and applicable cuts. Senator Marsden stated that he thought it would be helpful for the Joint Committee to visit another correctional facility and to obtain best-practices information from other states related to staffing conditions.

## **VI. Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Joint Committee, the meeting was adjourned by Senator Marsden.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The date, time and location of the next meeting of the Joint Committee to Study Staffing Levels and Employment Conditions at the Department of Corrections pursuant to SR 34 (2014) are to be determined. Information about upcoming meetings will be available through the Legislative Information System Meetings calendar.