

## Talking Points (Corrections)

HB 877 (Allen) Creation of a new Criminal Justice Legislative Oversight Committee that would be made up of legislators from both the Texas House and Senate, with the duty of overseeing correctional facilities in Texas.

HB 2650 (Allen) Would have revamped the existing legislative oversight committee. Currently, there is a legislative oversight committee expressly created in statute. However, until this year, there had been no new appointments to the committee since 2009. Although HB 2650 did not pass, the fact that the committee has new life could be a positive thing.

This year, the legislature passed SB 1003, which requires the review of adult and juvenile administrative segregation policies.

- The legislation requires the Legislative Oversight Committee to hire an independent third party to review administrative segregation.
- Just this month, new appointments were made.
- The Committee is made up of Chairman Tan Parker, Representatives Toni Rose and Ruth Jones McClendon, as well as senate appointees Chairman John Whitmire and Senators Ken Sliger and Chuy Hinajosa

In addition to the new assignment this year, Current law states that

- (a) The committee shall:
  - (1) use statistical analyses and other research methods to conduct an in-depth examination of the criminal justice system in this state that includes:
    - (A) an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the use of state and local funds in the criminal justice system;
    - (B) an identification of critical problems in the criminal justice system; and
    - (C) a determination of the long-range needs of the criminal justice system;
  - (2) recommend to the legislature:

(A) strategies to solve the problems identified under Subdivision (1)(B); and

(B) policy priorities to address the long-range needs determined under Subdivision (1)(C); and

(3) advise and assist the legislature in developing plans, programs, and proposed legislation to improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

(b) The committee has all other powers and duties provided to a special committee by:

(1) Subchapter B, Chapter 301;

(2) the rules of the senate and the house of representatives; and

(3) policies of the senate and house committees on administration.

HB 2652 (Allen) would have required TDCJ to provide inmates with reentry information within a reasonable time prior to reentry, and with county specific reentry information. It would not have required TDCJ to create information, but rather to pull from already existing resources. Although it did not pass through this specific piece of legislation, it did pass as a budget rider.

SB 213, by Senator Whitmire, was the sunset bill for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the Texas Board of Criminal Justice, and the Windham School, the Board of Pardons and Paroles and the Correctional Managed Health Care Committee. It has authorized all of the named agencies to continue until 2021. The bill also sets up a reentry task force.

A declining prison population and budget (\$97 million dollar cut), TDCJ closed two private prisons this year, operated by Corrections Corporation of America. The Dawson unit in Dallas, which has been rocked by scandal, including preventable inmate deaths, and the Mineral Wells Pre-Parole Transfer Facility.

According to TDCJ data, aggregated by the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

#### Prisons & State Jails

- Texas has 94 prison units.<sup>15</sup>
- Texas has 20 state jail facilities,<sup>16</sup> which largely house people with drug and property offenses.
- In FY 2010, a total of 42,858 individuals were admitted to state prisons and 23,537 were admitted to state jails.<sup>17</sup>

- Altogether, approximately 155,000 men and women are in Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) facilities, with more than 140,000 currently in prison units,<sup>18</sup> costing an average of \$18,538 per individual per year.<sup>19</sup>
- Of those in TDCJ facilities, approximately 12,000 are in state jail.<sup>20</sup> Housing people in state jails costs the state \$43 per bed per day,<sup>21</sup> or \$515,000 daily for all individuals housed there.
- Approximately 8% of all TDCJ inmates are female and 92% are male.<sup>22</sup>
- As of August 2011, nearly 95,000 individuals incarcerated in Texas prisons self-reported as having children.<sup>23</sup>
- Of the entire TDCJ population, 48.5% are incarcerated for nonviolent offenses,<sup>24</sup> costing taxpayers almost \$4 million per day.<sup>25</sup>
- Furthermore, approximately 80% of individuals entering TDCJ in FY 2010 were nonviolent.<sup>26</sup>
- In FY 2010, more than 22,000 individuals (just over 30% of incoming inmates) were admitted to TDCJ for a drug offense,<sup>27</sup> and over 70% of those individuals were charged with possession, as opposed to delivery or other offenses.<sup>28</sup>