



## **News for Immediate Release**

**Feb. 7, 2012**

### **Corrections Department Budget Holds Steady, Encourages Population Reduction Initiatives**

**Harrisburg** – The Department of Corrections was able to request no increase in funding for fiscal year 2012-13, leaving the agency level-funded at \$1.87 billion. This historic achievement was made possible by cutting more than \$100 million in costs during the past year.

Since the 1992-93 fiscal year, the department had received average annual increases of \$81 million in most years. Since that time, the prison population has more than doubled, rising from 24,952 inmates to 51,638 inmates today.

“I am excited and believe this is a great budget for us,” Corrections Secretary John Wetzel said. “Our budget is based upon an expected population reduction and subsequent housing unit closings. It requires us to strategically drive down our population, and that anticipated reduction is what allows us to continue operating without an increase in funding.

“For years there has been talk about prison reform,” Wetzel continued. “This budget puts our money where our mouth is because it includes proven strategies to responsibly manage our inmate population.”

Major highlights of the department’s 2012-13 fiscal year budget include:

- Cost-containment measures to improve department processes, workers compensation management and a partial hiring freeze;
- Legislative reform to expand the use of State Intermediate Punishment, Recidivism Risk Reduction Incentive program and the Quehanna Boot Camp;
- Continued work with the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole to improve accurate scheduling of parole hearings and to expand the use of parole violator centers;
- \$8.2 million in funding to address the pay compression issue for nearly 900 corrections managers.

The department is able to operate within this budget because major strides have been made to save money and significant budget cuts have been made.

Since he was named the department’s secretary last year, Wetzel called for Corrections employees to economize spending without jeopardizing public safety or the various crime-reducing programs provided to inmates.

To date, the department has received more than 500 cost-savings suggestions from employees, all of which are currently under review for possible implementation.

In addition, one planned prison project was canceled and a second was redesigned, resulting in a planned facility that better meets the department's mission and reduces costs.

The cancellation of SCI German, in Fayette County, will result in a \$200 million savings in capital budget funding and \$60 million in annual operating costs, beginning in 2014 when the prison was expected to open.

This past year, the department also successfully lobbied for legislation requiring medical facilities and providers to charge both state and county prisons Medicare rates for inpatient services and Medicaid rates for outpatient services. This alone is expected to save the state more than \$16 million a year.

In 2011, Corrections officials also worked with the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole to improve processes and to identify and eliminate redundancies.

"We have come a long way in the past year to control spending," Wetzel said. "We are ready for the next step and Justice Reinvestment is the catalyst to make responsible, data-driven changes," Wetzel said. "The department is now working with the Council of State Governments, the PEW Foundation, legislators, district attorneys, judges, crime victims, and other interested groups, as part of Pennsylvania's newly-formed Justice Reinvestment Initiative.

"We're working to identify ways to enhance the state's criminal justice system, make it more efficient and more cost-effective."

Over the next few months, the JRI's working group, led by Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Chairman Mark Zimmer, will use data from several state agencies to identify potential criminal justice system improvements.

Similar efforts in other states have shown that the reinvestment of state funds from the prison system to community-based policing and programming can result in an overall decrease in crime.

"Justice Reinvestment will result in a data-driven decision-making process throughout the criminal justice system, a side benefit of which will be an eventual reduction in the inmate population and state prison spending," Wetzel said. "I am excited for this process to begin here in Pennsylvania. We have identified an attainable path to reel in corrections spending, and we look forward to working with the General Assembly to make it a reality."

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