



## **News for Immediate Release**

**Dec. 6, 2012**

### **Criminal Justice Experts Tour Prisons to Prepare for European Trip**

**Harrisburg** - Pennsylvania criminal justice officials and policymakers concluded a two-day conference today, sponsored by the Department of Corrections, to examine the state's prison system in preparation for a tour of corrections facilities and practices in Europe next year.

The European-American Prison Project, which is a new project managed by the Vera Institute of Justice in collaboration with the Pennsylvania DOC and funded by the Prison Law Office, aims to educate American and European policymakers about successful corrections policies and practices used in the United States and Europe.

The goal of the project is to advance the international discussion among professionals around what works in corrections, how to communicate those beliefs to stakeholders and stimulate reform efforts in the United States.

"Criminal justice reform is important to the governor and to this state," Corrections Secretary John Wetzel said.

"Earlier this year Gov. Tom Corbett spearheaded Pennsylvania's Justice Reinvestment Initiative. This bi-partisan effort to reform the system in Pennsylvania involved individuals from all aspects of the system. The experiences and information shared over this two-day conference fits in with our state's ongoing efforts to ensure our criminal justice system is efficient and effective," Wetzel said.

The conferences and facility tours, held Wednesday at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford and today at the State Correctional Institution at Chester, precede the PA State Team's February visit to Germany and the Netherlands. The 2013 itinerary will include tours of facilities and roundtable discussions.

"We have shared a lot of information over the past two days," Wetzel said. "We look forward to traveling to Europe to see firsthand how their criminal justice system works and whether we can bring home with us ideas that can be used to improve our operations."

On the PA State Team scheduled to visit Europe early next year are:

- Corrections Secretary John Wetzel
- DOC director of Planning, Research & Statistics Bret Bucklen
- Dauphin County District Attorney Ed Marsico

- Sen. Stewart Greenleaf (R-Montgomery/Bucks)
- Rep. Glen Grell (R-Cumberland)
- Rep. Ron Waters (D-Delaware/Philadelphia)
- County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania Deputy Director Brinda Carroll Penyak
- Executive Director of the PA Commission on Sentencing Mark Bergstrom
- Allegheny County Judge John Zottola
- Jane Janeczek, former Governor George Leader's daughter and Commonwealth Foundation board member

The trip is financed by the Vera Institute of Justice, Prison Law Office and other private sources.

In late spring, Vera will convene state debriefing sessions where participants will discuss their experiences and determine whether concepts can be used in Pennsylvania and the United States.

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