



## **News for Immediate Release**

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### **Corrections Population Decrease is Largest One-Year Drop Since 1971**

*Prison Reform Efforts are Showing Results*

**Harrisburg** – Secretary of the Department of Corrections John Wetzel today announced that the agency ended the calendar year with a population of 51,184 inmates.

"This is a decrease of 454 inmates from last calendar year," said DOC Planning, Research and Statistics Director Kristofer Bucklen. "This also was the largest one-year drop in our population since 1971, and only the third time in the past 40 years that our population has shown an annual decrease rather than an increase."

"Our declining inmate population shows that we are on the right track to improving our corrections system," Wetzel said. "Gov. Corbett began leading this reform by ordering the corrections system to analyze and improve ourselves."

"This is a strong indication that the Corbett Corrections Reform is starting to yield results for the citizens of Pennsylvania. At the same time, the Governor initiated the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI), in which he set the benchmark by urging JRI members to reach their goals in only a matter of months. In other states, similar efforts take years. Taking a bi-partisan, participatory planning approach, this process should allow us to build on the progress we've made within the administration."

This population decrease was a joint accomplishment involving many in the criminal justice continuum, especially the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, Wetzel said.

Fewer court commitments combined with policy changes that enable Pennsylvania to both reduce spending and increase public safety are beginning to take shape, Wetzel added.

"Gov. Corbett instructed state government to improve performance," Wetzel said. "System efficiencies are reducing backlogs in the parole process, enabling more people to be reviewed by the Parole Board."

"In this short period of time, we have seen the percent of parole board inmate interviews increase from 58 to 83 percent, which is the highest percentage of docketed cases ever seen historically," Wetzel said.

In addition, new court admissions were down 154 inmates, compared to 2011, and parole releases were up by 1,176 inmates.

Wetzel also pointed out that "short min" inmates – or those inmates committed to the DOC who have less than one year to serve until they reach their minimum sentence expiration date -- are being classified quicker by DOC staff.

"This increase in the classification process means that 'short min' inmates are more likely to be prepared for parole at their minimum sentence date rather than months beyond that date," Wetzel said. "In 2012, the average time for classification of a short minimum sentenced inmate dropped from 75 days to 30 days (a drop of about a month and a half)."

"These indicators of progress are a credit to all staff across all agencies that we are doing what we need to do," Wetzel said. "We are heading in the right direction thanks to everyone's efforts. I especially want to acknowledge the leadership of Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal, who has headed up the internal improvement efforts."

Wetzel also said that his agency plans to release a new landmark recidivism report within the next few months which will become the benchmark for reporting recidivism and crime reduction resulting from corrections reform, as well as provide citizens the opportunity to measure the results.

For more information, visit the Department of Corrections website at:  
[www.cor.state.pa.us](http://www.cor.state.pa.us)

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