

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 1, 2023

1:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Sarah Vance, Chair  
Representative Jamie Allard, Vice Chair  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Representative Craig Johnson  
Representative David Eastman  
Representative Andrew Gray  
Representative Cliff Groh

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS OVERVIEW

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

JEN WINKELMAN, Commissioner Designee  
Department of Corrections  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-provided a PowerPoint and answered questions during the Department of Corrections Overview.

JEREMY HOUGH, Director of Institutions  
Department of Corrections  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information during the Department of Corrections Overview.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILKERSON  
Department of Corrections  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-provided a PowerPoint and answered questions during the Department of Corrections Overview.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:00:18 PM](#)

**CHAIR SARAH VANCE** called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Representatives Gray, Groh, Allard, and Vance were present at the call to order. Representatives Carpenter, C. Johnson, and Eastman arrived as the meeting was in progress.

### **Department of Corrections Overview**

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CHAIR VANCE announced that the only order of business would be a presentation on the Department of Corrections.

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JEN WINKELMAN, Commissioner Designee, Department of Corrections, began an overview of the Department of Corrections (DOC) via PowerPoint [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She directed attention to slide 2, "Mission and Core Services," and shared the following mission statement: to provide secure confinement, reformative programs, and a process of supervised community reintegration to enhance the safety of our communities. She gave a brief history of the department, noting that in fiscal year 2024 (FY 24) there are approximately 2,109 full-time positions and a budget request of just over \$419 million. She noted that the graphic at the bottom of slide 2 shows where the different core services of the department fit within divisions. She noted that slide 3 lists "Core Services," which are broken down into three categories: secure confinement, supervised release, and reformative programs.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN turned to slide 4, "DOC At A Glance," and noted that Alaska is one of seven states that operates a unified correctional system, one in which there is an integrated state-level prison and jail system. She noted that in FY 22, DOC booked 27,748 offenders. As of January 1, 2023, DOC was responsible for 10,748 individuals.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to a question from Representative Groh as to whether Alaska spends more than local governments compared to other states, said she does not know but would look for an answer.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN continued on slide 5, which provides an organizational chart of DOC, including: the Office of the Commissioner, the Division of Institutions, the Division of Health and Rehabilitation Services, the Division of Pretrial, Probation, and Parole, the Division of Administrative Services, and the Parole Board. She pointed out that Parole Board is housed under DOC in terms of budget but is autonomous; the members of the board are appointed by the governor and approved by the legislature.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN discussed slide 6, "Division of Institutions," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

- Institution Director's Office
  - Inmate Time Accounting
  - Chaplaincy Program
  - Prison Rape Elimination Act Oversight
  - Inmate Grievance Resolution
  - Security Threat Group
  
- Inmate Transportation and Point of Arrest
  - Inmate Medical Transports
  - Inmate Housing Transports
  - K-9 Unit
  - Point of Arrest
  
- Classification and Furlough
  - Inmate Classification
  - Inmate Furlough
  
- 13 Correctional Centers
  
- 7 Community Residential Centers (CRC)
  - 5 Locations

- 6 Sentenced Electronic Monitoring (EM) Offices
  
- Out-of-State
  - Medical and Separate placements

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN showed a map on slide 7, "Facility Locations," explaining that there are institutions in Bethel, Nome, Juneau, Ketchikan, and several in the Southcentral Valley and Kenai Peninsula area.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Representative Groh, confirmed that DOC oversees 15 community and regional jails.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN continued to slide 8, "Facility Capacity," which offers a bar chart showing capacity in all the facilities, with the yellow lines representing general capacity, and the red lines representing maximum capacity. She emphasized the department's efforts to keep capacity below the general level and how that positively affects the safety and well-being of both staff and inmates. She discussed prison population by legal status, as shown on slide 9, noting that the unsentenced population has surpassed the sentenced population. She indicated factors of consideration around backlogs during the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in criminal charges. In response to Representative Allard, she explained that during the pandemic, hours of court operation were reduced, thus people waited in unsentenced status for a longer period of time. To a follow-up question, she said she does not know about backlogs prior to the pandemic but would return with an answer at a later date.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN returned to the PowerPoint, to slide 10, "Prison Population By Length Of Stay." It lists the population on July 1, 2022: 47 percent of the population was serving 6 months or less; second to that was those serving 37 months or more. She next showed slide 11, which shows prison population by offense class, also as a snapshot on July 1, 2022. She explained that this slide shows the same populations as from

slide 10, and it lists the crimes for which they were being held. She said sex offenders typically fall under the category of crimes against a person, but the slide shows those as two categories because of perceived interest. In response to Representative Allard, she confirmed that crimes against children are included in crimes against a person, and she indicated she could find out the standalone number for crimes against children. In response to a question from Representative Groh, she explained that driving under the influence (DUI) crime falls under the category of alcohol, while the "vehicle" category indicates such crimes as driving without a license. In response to a follow-up question, she added further information regarding crimes against children.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, moved on to slide 12, "Division of Health and Rehabilitation Services," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

- Health & Rehabilitation Director's Office
  - Medical Oversight
  - Medicaid Assistance
- Physical Health Care
  - Medical
  - Dental
- Behavioral Health Care
  - Mental Health Services
  - Assess Plan Identify & Coordinate (APIC)
  - Institutional Discharge Planning Plus (IDP+)
- Substance Abuse
  - Assessment
  - Residential Treatment
  - Institutional Out-Patient Treatment
- Sex Offender Management
  - Polygraph
  - Institutional Sex Offender Program
  - Community Sex Offender Program
- Domestic Violence Program
  - Batterer's Intervention Program
- Reentry & Recidivism Unit
  - Offender Reentry
  - Community Coordination
- Education/Vocational Programs

- Basic Adult Education
- Apprenticeship Training
- Vocational Training

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN discussed Reentry Services, shown on slide 13, and she said this is a critical piece of what the department does. She noted that these services include offender management plans (OMPs) and reentry coalitions.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to a question from Representative C. Johnson regarding how beds are counted, said DOC currently has 339 individuals in a community residential center, and that is separate from the institutional population. To a follow-up, she indicated that population is not full currently. She deferred to Jeremy Hough for further response.

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JEREMY HOUGH, Director of Institutions, Department of Corrections (DOC), related that the current capacity at the CRCs is 74 percent. In response to a follow-up, he said he would find out the difference between the cost of a CRC bed and that in a prison cell.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN returned to the PowerPoint, to slide 14, "Division of Pretrial, Probation, and Parole," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

- Probation and Parole Director's Office
  - Victim Service Unit
- Pretrial Services
  - Assessments
  - Supervision
  - Pretrial Electronic Monitoring
- Statewide Probation and Parole
  - 13 regional locations
  - Probation Accountability with Certain Enforcement
  - Pre-Sentencing Unit

- Interstate Compact
  
- 15 Regional and Community Jails
  - Bristol Bay Borough
  - City of Cordova
  - City of Craig
  - City of Dillingham
  - City of Haines
  - City of Homer
  - City of Kodiak
  - City of Kotzebue
  - North Slope Borough
  - City of Petersburg
  - City of Seward
  - City of Sitka
  - City of Unalaska
  - City of Valdez
  - City of Wrangell

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN continued to slide 15, "Supervised Release," which is a map depicting the location of DOC's Pretrial and Probation Offices, Community Residential Centers, and Sentenced Electronic Monitoring Offices. Slide 16, "Pre-Trial Services," reflects the population [on July 1, 2022] for pre-trial. It compares numbers for community supervision and pending release in both 2021 and 2022. She explained the nuances of those individuals involved in multiple cases. Moving to slide 17, "Probation and Parole," she noted that the increase in the numbers from 2021 to 2022 means more cases are being resolved. She further noted that there is a cap on the number of cases parole officers can have, which is something to watch as case numbers rise.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Representative Eastman, said the cap of 75 cases is a worst-case scenario. In response to a follow-up question regarding the optimal number, she said it depends on the circumstances, but she has heard numbers from the mid-20s to 50 or 60. She said it would be difficult to state how many officers are managing numbers higher than optimal based on each of their capabilities.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Representative Gray, shared her background with DOC. In response to a follow-up question, she shared her personal experience with issues that have arisen, and said she thinks a caseload of 50 is reasonable. That said, she related that she never covered sex offender caseloads, which are much more time intensive. She spoke about the benefit of community partnerships to access a variety of resources. To another question, she named housing as a challenging issue, especially to house sex offenders within a community.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Representative Allard, explained that the court orders where a sex offender will be housed, and where the individual cannot be housed, for example, within so many miles of the victim. Sometimes sex offenders are released to shelters. Landlords are sometimes hesitant to place a released sex offender in their rental units. In response to a follow-up question, she confirmed that a sex offender released to a shelter could mean the individual is close to a school.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Chair Vance, regarding how DOC reacts to the courts' decisions to return a person to place of arrest, outlined the steps taken. In the case of a sex offender, DOC may need to approach the court to request "an alteration" on "a condition."

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Representative Allard, offered an idea for a solution would be to have some sort of housing for released sex offenders. Beyond that, she indicated that it is a complicated matter.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Representative C. Johnson, confirmed that it is the place of arrest where DOC must return a released person; therefore, even if the person is from Fairbanks, for example, the person would be returned to Anchorage if that is where they were arrested. To a follow-up question, she affirmed there is a transfer process available for those on probation or parole so that they can get back to where they are from in order to return to, for example, their support

system. In response to Representative C. Johnson asking if it would be helpful to change statute to allow the person to be released directly to their home, she indicated that the parole officer who has worked with the person would try really hard to get them back to where they want to be.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILKERSON, Department of Corrections, clarified that exceptions are allowed under "the administrative manual." For example, when it is documented that it is in the best interest of the state, DOC can get the documentation approved to transport the individual back to their community rather than to the place of arrest.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Representative C. Johnson inquiring again if the statute needs to be changed, said she would investigate and provide an answer at a later date.

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CHAIR VANCE suggested that a change in statute may save the department administrative time.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD made an observation about saving costs via efficiency.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to a question from Representative Eastman regarding whether there is ever a circumstance in which a person cannot be returned to their home and have a parole officer available, spoke about a collaborative approach wherein the individual released to a small village may check in with a teacher at a school or undergo treatment by video, for example. She indicated one restriction in a parolee being sent home is if the victim lives in that home.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILKERSON, in response to Representative Gray, offered her understanding that the current process taken under regulation is not burdensome; however, she said she is not aware of the impact of individuals released from custody at place of arrest and "not being given (indisc.) back to a different location because they have other resources."

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY posited that there may be good reason to continue with the status quo if it is not currently problematic to do so.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN returned to the PowerPoint and gave information related to slide 18, "Board of Parole," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

- Board of Parole
  - Discretionary Parole
  - Mandatory Parole
  - Special Medical Parole
  - Geriatric Parole
  - Executive Clemency Program
  
- Parole Board Members
  - Leitoni Matakaiongo Tupou, Chair
  - Sarah Possenti, Vice Chair
  - Steve Meyer, Member
  - Jason Wilson, Member
  - Ole Larson, Member

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN continued to slide 19, "Division of Administrative Services," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

- Administrative Services
  - Budget and Finance
  - Inmate Banking
  - Auditing and Internal Controls
  - Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC)
  - Construction Procurement and Space Liaison
  - Alcohol Ignition Interlock Device Certification
  
- Information Technology
  - Alaska Corrections Offender Management System
  - Inmate Law Library
  - Inmate Technology Support

- Research and Records
  - Permanent Fund Dividend Eligibility Determination/Appeals
  - Research and Reporting
  - Criminal Justice Information Security
  - Data Management
  - Web Page
  - Inmate DNA Collections and Tracking
  
- Facilities Capital Unit & OSHA Compliance
  - Management Renovation, Repairs, and Construction Management
  - OSHA Compliance and Oversight

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN picked up at slide 20, "Office of the Commissioner," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

- Commissioner's Office
  - Constituent Relations
  - Compliance Standards
  - Inmate ADA Grievances
  - Public Information
  - Policy and Procedures
  - Employee Wellness Program
  - Human Resources
  - Employee Backgrounds
  
- Recruitment and Retention
  - Recruitment Outreach
  - Applicant Assistance
  - Officer Medical Reimbursement
  - Recruitment Incentive Leave Program
  - Correctional Officer Seniority Tracking
  
- Training Academy
  - Basic Officer Training
  - Field Officer Training
  - Prisoner Transportation Officer Training
  - Firearm / Taser Training and Certification

- Municipal Officer Academy
- Offender Time Accounting
- Use of Force
- Methods of Instruction

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN explained that slide 21, "Positions By Category," illustrates comparisons between budgeted versus filled positions for FY 23 in the following categories: Adult Probation Officer; Correctional Officer; Critical Support; Maintenance; and Medical/Mental Health. She stated that today DOC's departmental vacancy is at 13 percent. She discussed the challenges in recruitment and retention.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Chair Vance, confirmed that 13 percent is an improvement compared to prior rates. She segued to slide 22, "Positions by Institutions," which compare the budgeted and filled positions for FY 23 for each institution. She said this includes maintenance and other support areas of the department.

[2:04:32 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Representative Eastman, confirmed that the Matanuska-Susitna Correctional Facility does show as having a higher level of filled positions than budgeted positions. She deferred to Deputy Commissioner Wilkerson for further explanation.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILKERSON added that this is a strategic move in anticipation of staff turnover, to ensure assignments are filled and to allow for temporary assignments to other locations.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Chair Vance, said housing seems to be one of the bigger challenges for the Spring Creek Facility. She characterized the work as "a constant juggling game." She moved on to slide 23, "Goals and Objectives," and listed the three main goals of DOC: health and wellbeing of staff; ensuring those who come in to DOC's custody leave better than they entered; and identifying efficiencies and resources to reduce recidivism. She commended DOC's staff and

spoke about the efforts being made and challenges being met, including medical examinations, investigations, the reimbursable service agreement, the death of an inmate policy, public awareness, and Project 2025 to reduce suicides within DOC.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Chair Vance, said DOC has "pieces and parts" in terms of supporting staff who experience hardships in the corrections environment. She emphasized her vision is to focus on the well-being of employees. She thanked the committee and concluded the presentation by showing slide 24, which shows photos of the department's canine unit members.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to Representative Eastman, said the traditional work schedule for corrections officers are 12-hour day shifts, followed by one week off, followed by 12-hour night shifts; however, this schedule can vary. In response to a follow-up question about planning a schedule to get overtime pay, she said she has not heard of that. She noted that DOC works with the Alaska Correctional Officers Association, as well as bargaining units, to arrive at desired work schedules.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN, in response to a comment from Representative Gray regarding possible resistance from inmates at being transferred to other facilities, said this could be for various different reasons. For example, an incarcerated individual may receive more visitors in one location or is working with an attorney in the area. She said DOC's classification staff considers all the factors.

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CHAIR VANCE thanked both presenters.

[2:25:13 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.