

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

February 2, 2023

1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Forrest Dunbar, Chair
Senator Donald Olson, Vice Chair
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Senator Cathy Giessel

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S): DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY OVERVIEW

- HEARD

PRESENTATION(S): DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS OVERVIEW

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JAMES COCKRELL, Commissioner
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the department overview.

JOEL HARD, Director
Policy and Programs
Village Public Safety Officer Operations
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the presentation.

LISA PURINTON, Legislative Liaison

Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the DPS presentation.

JENNIFER WINKELMAN, Commissioner Designee
Department of Corrections (DOC)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the department overview.

Adam Rutherford, Acting Director
Division of Health and Rehabilitation Services
Department of Corrections (DOC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the DOC overview.

JEFF EDWARDS, Executive Director
Alaska Board of Parole
Department of Corrections (DOC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the DOC overview.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CHAIR FORREST DUNBAR called the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gray-Jackson, Giessel and Chair Dunbar. Senator Bjorkman joined the meeting immediately thereafter. Senator Olson arrived while the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION(S): DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY OVERVIEW

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CHAIR DUNBAR announced an overview of the Department of Public Safety (DPS) presented by Commissioner Cockrell. He invited the commissioner to put himself on the record and begin the presentation.

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JAMES COCKRELL, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Anchorage, Alaska, presented the department overview. He made a brief statement about the department's status, indicating it is strong and has received a lot of support from the governor and legislature. He said the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO)

program has blossomed. He has seen the number of Village Public Safety Officer increase from 45 to 68. DPS is funded for 65, but the department pinched its pennies and funded an additional three VPSOs for communities that desperately need law enforcement coverage.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slide 2, stating the department's mission is protecting life and property. He considers the state's core issues, then drafts the department's budget around them. He reviewed the department's key objectives:

- Recruit and Retain
- Rural Alaska Law Enforcement and Safety
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- Village Public Safety Officer Program
- Fisheries and Wildlife Resource Protection
- Narcotics, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons, and Major Investigations

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SENATOR BJORKMAN joined the meeting.

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL shared some department successes on slide 3, noting this list could contain about 100 more:

Department Success in 2022

- Added two missing and murdered indigenous persons investigators
- Seized 13,425,000 potentially fatal doses of fentanyl statewide
- Currently have 68 Village Public Safety Officers

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SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked how many communities need a public safety officer.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied he did not have the exact number. He will gather that information for the committee. The state has failed rural Alaska in providing reasonable law enforcement protection. It has been an injustice since statehood. He surmised that of the 229 federally recognized tribes, over half of them need a law enforcement presence. They might have a federally funded village police officer (VPO) or a tribal police officer. However, they do not have a VPSO, who has a higher

level of training, or a state trooper. He said it would take considerable effort, and the state should focus on this issue at some point. It has been 50 years since statehood, and the issue remains unresolved.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON commented that she appreciates the progress. She asked if Akutan has a VPSO.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied yes, but said the Director of Village Public Safety Officer Operations could verify.

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JOEL HARD, Director, Policy and Programs, Village Public Safety Officer Program, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Anchorage, Alaska, answered questions during the presentation. He said the closest VPSO on the Aleutian Chain is located in Adak; two VPSOs are stationed there.

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL continued the review of slide 3.

Department Success in 2022 [continued from above]

- 15.2% decrease in Alaska's overall crime rate
 - This reflects the lowest number of reported offenses since 1975 and continues the downward trend in Alaska crime that started in 2018

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL said the one area of crime that continues to climb is sexual assaults. Last year in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, law enforcement received 320 reports of felony-level sexual assaults; the targets were primarily females. For comparison purposes, consider Anchorage's population, and that it had just over 600 felony sexual assaults last year.

- Continuing to work to hire new State Troopers; 51 new Troopers started training in 2022

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL said on the positive side, the department sent 51 candidates to the Alaska State Trooper Academy in the last two years. Twenty-four graduated from the previous class. The class in February is pushing for 25 graduates. The DPS recruitment effort has been strong, working statewide and nationwide. He expressed that he'd like to hire more Alaskans and see more diversification in the Alaska State Trooper (AST) ranks.

- Expansion of the wellness program

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL summarized slide 4 that shows the department's organizational chart. He said the department has four divisions and four councils.

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slides 5 and 6, Division of State Troopers. He summarized the division's sections and bureaus on slide 5:

Division of Alaska State Troopers

Alaska Bureau of Investigation
Statewide Drug and Alcohol Enforcement
Four State Trooper Detachments
Aircraft Section
Bureau of Highway Patrol
Bureau of Judicial Services
Search and Rescue
Prisoner Transportation
Dispatch Services
Rural Trooper Housing
Training Academy Recruit Salaries
Recruitment and Retention Incentives

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL reviewed slide 6 and the department detachment boundaries. A map depicted the four geographical headquarters for state trooper detachments A, B, C, and D. The northernmost post is in Kotzebue, and the southernmost post is down by Klawock on Prince of Wales Island. He expressed his belief that Alaska is just shy of 43 posts statewide. Slide 6 reads:

Accomplishments

- Seized 215% more methamphetamine, 440% more fentanyl, and 334% more heroin in 2022 than in 2021
- Solved 85% of homicides that occurred within Alaska State Trooper jurisdiction (includes boroughs, municipalities, and cities when support was requested)
- Expansion of the two-on/two-off shared housing program

Challenges

- Recruitment and Retention
- Technological changes allow for new criminal exploitations, including identity theft, child pornography, online sexual exploitation, and computer fraud schemes
- Importation of drugs and alcohol into rural Alaska

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CHAIR DUNBAR asked whether Alaska has appreciably fewer smuggled drugs and usage compared to previous years.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL responded that based on the number and amount of drug seizures, Alaska is inundated with more drugs and usage than in previous years. He said the profit margin is one reason for the rise in drugs. Most of the drugs moving through Alaska originate in Mexico. Smugglers move the drugs to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and elsewhere via Alaska Airlines, Delta Airline, the United States Postal Service, boats, and other methods. The department refocused its efforts and is intercepting and seizing huge amounts of drugs, more than in the past. He said the price of street drugs is one way the department knows whether it is making a big dent in shipments; the department does not see a rise even with the huge increase in seized drugs. An increase in the number of drugs seized during traffic stops and warrant arrests is another way the department can identify the number of smuggled drugs is growing.

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SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON drew attention to "detachments" on slide 6 and requested more information about the four trooper detachments.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied that the state is divided into four geographical areas; each area has a headquarters.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON sought confirmation that detachments could be likened to satellite police stations.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied that the detachment areas are permanent. The detachment boundaries are tweaked but have mostly stayed the same in the past 30 years.

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slide 7, Vacancies. This slide graphed trooper vacancy rates. He said a lot of discussions revolve around trooper vacancies; the department can never seem

to catch up. The department gains a batch of trooper [graduates], then loses some to retirement, or they move elsewhere. He said the department has 320 authorized state trooper positions and 42 vacancies, which is not a bad number. The department has 89 wildlife trooper positions, eight of which are vacant. The total number of vacancies is approximately 50 in the trooper job class.

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slide 8, Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers. He said wildlife troopers are essentially game wardens. They are fully-fledged Alaska State Troopers focused on fish and game enforcement. Fish and Game resources in the state are worth over \$5 million per year; this includes sport fishing, hunting, dip netting on the Kenai, and wildlife viewing. The state needs wildlife troopers to enforce fish and game laws, ensuring Alaskans all get their fair share. He said when he started with the department in 1983, there were 121 wildlife troopers. Today the state has 89 or 90. Almost one million licenses were sold last year, and 90 troopers enforced fish and game regulations. The fishing and hunting industries are huge economic drivers in many areas of the state. Wildlife troopers have a larger presence in those areas. Wildlife troopers rely heavily on vessels and aircraft.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL mentioned that a newspaper wrote about how long it took state troopers to arrive at a violent crime scene in one of the villages, three or four days. State troopers relied on charter aircraft for transportation to rural villages but after COVID, many charter services closed their doors. The department now relies heavily on its own aircraft because it can no longer rely on charters. Slide 8 listed wildlife trooper accomplishments and challenges:

Accomplishments

- Collaboration with State and federal agencies, search and rescue groups, and public resource users
- Boating safety education and enforcement to reduce boating fatalities
- Identification of commercial resource crime and successful prosecution

Challenges

- 6,640 miles of coastline, significant hunts and fisheries

- Complicated regulatory structure and limited resources; 891,000 licenses sold and 90 Troopers

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slides 9 and 10, Village Public Safety Officer Program. The VPSO program is a bright star in the department. It is the strongest it has been in a long time. Previously, the Division of Alaska State Troopers managed the VPSO Program. Now, the VPSO Program has a director-level position to run operations. This position is equivalent to a trooper colonel. It deservedly directly under the Office of the Commissioner. He said DPS has a budget ask for that position. These changes advanced the program by leaps and bounds in a short period of time. Slide 9 reads as follows:

Bridging the department's public safety responsibility with tribal partners

- Law Enforcement
- Fire Suppression and Prevention
- Water Safety
- Search and Rescue
- Emergency Medical Services
- Probation and Parole

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL spoke to slide 10:

Program Status

- \$15,207.7 awarded
- 10 Grantees
- 68 VPSOs currently employed

Accomplishments

- 2022 Statute Reform: Added program clarity and improved wages and support (multi-officer assignment, traveling officers, training reform, Tribal relationships w/ DPS liaison)

Challenges

- Recruitment and retention
- Insufficient rural public safety infrastructure, lack of housing

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL emphasized that one of the department's problems is a lack of decent VPSO and trooper housing in rural

areas. The lack of decent housing has been ongoing for many years and is a stumbling block, even in bigger hubs like Nome, Kotzebue, and Bethel. U.S. Senator Murkowski got \$3 million in federal funds for trooper rural housing. Decent housing is necessary if VPSOs and troopers are sent to rural areas.

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slide 11 and spoke to the subject of deputy fire marshals:

Division of Fire and Life Safety

Mission: to prevent the loss of life and property from fire and explosion. Fire safety is improved through three means:

- Enforcement (Life Safety Inspection Bureau)
- Engineering (Plan Review Bureau)
- Education (Bureau of Fire Accreditation, Standards and Training)

Accomplishments

- 664 building fire and life safety inspections
- 776 fire and building plan reviews completed
- 45 significant fire investigated

Challenges

- Rural fire department capacity
- Communication methods to reach high-risk groups and areas regarding personal responsibility to decrease loss

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL reviewed slide 12, Division of Statewide Services.

Alaska Public Safety Communication Services

- Supported 12,409,758 calls and 20,436,826 push to talks
- Completed update of site repeaters in all State-owned sites

Information Systems

- Initiated a digitization of case files to the Alaska Records Management System

- Rolled out Online Police Reporting

Criminal Justice Information Systems Program

- Secured multiple federal grants for Criminal Justice Information Services modernization project
- FBI approved the DPS National Incident Based Reporting System for data to be submitted on behalf of 30 law enforcement agencies

Alaska Scientific Crime Detection Lab

- 9,146 DNA database samples from arrestees and convicted offenders
- 2,491 sexual assault kit testing completed; backlog reduced by 57% per AS 44.41.065

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SENATOR GIESSEL asked if this is where background checks are done.

LISA PURINTON, Legislative Liaison, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Anchorage, Alaska, answered yes. The Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN) is the criminal history repository; fingerprint-based background check information flows from this network.

SENATOR GIESSEL sought clarification on whether fingerprint background checks are submitted on paper or electronically.

MS. PURINTON answered that the Division of Statewide Services is modernizing its Criminal Justice Information Services. The APSIN system was designed in the 1980s. The infrastructure on that application is old. The division accepts some electronically submitted fingerprints. She said DPS has to accept fingerprints submitted from state or government agencies. For example, the Department of Corrections (DOC) submits the electronic fingerprints of those arrested through a live scan device. Fingertips are placed on a glass device and transmitted electronically; the process is inkless. The division works with the Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS). DFCS is kind of a clearinghouse for its clients and submits its fingerprints to DPS electronically. The division partners with other entities that want to submit their fingerprints electronically. Fingerprint results are usually sent to the applicant and the licensing or employing body in a mailed letter.

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SENATOR GIESSEL said that she was told the glacial licensing process is partially due to an antiquated background check process with paper fingerprints. She asked whether the division plans to improve the paper fingerprint process.

MS. PURINTON answered that the division accepts electronic fingerprints from state and government agencies. She explained the division could not accept scanned fingerprints from a private entity like a daycare center. The division must maintain the system's integrity for security purposes because that data enters the state and national databases. State and federal agencies require background checks for certain licenses and employment, including fingerprint submission. Licensing and employing agencies required to obtain criminal histories are DPS clients. The division's turnaround time on electronic and hard card fingerprints is a little over 4.04 days. With current staffing, the department turns them around as quickly as possible.

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL spoke to slide 13, Alaska Scientific Crime Detection Lab. He said that Alaska has one of the nation's premier crime labs when it comes to quality of work, facilities, and staff. The crime lab belongs to DPS, not the state troopers. The department wants to ensure that there is no internal influence on evidence handling or processing. The charts on slide 13 showed the yearly DNA submissions, backlog, and lab processing times.

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SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON commented that the crime lab was impressive and had a great team.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL commented the lab got caught up on and processed its backlog of sexual assault kits. Victims of sexual assault will be able to track their kit all the way through the system; the tracking app will be live soon.

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL reviewed slide 14, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault:

Purpose: To empower Alaska communities to create a future free of domestic and sexual violence.

Mission: Promotes the prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault and provides safety for Alaskans victimized or impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault through a statewide system of crisis intervention and support, and by supporting perpetrator accountability and rehabilitation.

- Eleven (11) member Board of Directors;
- Eleven (11) full-time staff;
- Fund 34 community-based agencies serving Utqiagvik to Unalaska;
- Manage and monitor a total of 90 grant awards;
- Support statewide efforts to reduce and end domestic and sexual violence in Alaska.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL mentioned language accessibility for victims searching for resources in native and other languages.

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CHAIR DUNBAR commented that the Anchorage Police Department (APD) does not inform federal immigration about domestic violence calls because APD does not want to disincentivize that kind of reporting. He asked about the DPS policy on notifying federal immigration when the caller reporting domestic violence is undocumented.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied that he does not know. He will get that information for the committee.

[2:06:43 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked about sex trafficking and the department's progress in this area.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL answered that Alaska has a sex trafficking issue. The [Governor's Council on Human and] Sex Trafficking issued a report. He believed the report was posted on the department's website. The governor's bill contains several statutes addressing sex trafficking. Alaska and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) each have a sex trafficking task force, and APD is involved. DPS focuses on sex trafficking based on compliance but does not have a unit dedicated to sex trafficking.

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL reviewed slide 15, Violent Crimes Compensation Board. He said the Department of Administration

(DOA) transferred this board about a year and a half ago. When DPS took the board over, well over 1,000 applications were pending. The board has a staff of three, which includes the executive director. The board's mission is to alleviate some financial burdens victims face following a violent crime. He said the board is grossly understaffed. He said that nationwide most states average between six and eight staff, some with fewer applications than Alaska receives. The board addresses these types of crimes and expenses:

Crime and Expense Type

Homicide	Funeral & Burial
Assault	Lost Wages
Arson	Medical & Mental Health
Child Abuse	Relocation
Sexual Assault	Safety & Security
DUI/DWI	Crime Scene Clean Up
Robbery	Travel

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COMMISSIONER COCKRELL summarized slide 16, Alaska Police Standards Council. The council provides the curriculum for police training. He said the council also reviews discipline issues, noting it can suspend a correction officer's certificate. Most of the council's funding is from surcharges on traffic tickets and court fees. Four people serve on the council. The slide reads:

Mission:

To produce and maintain a highly trained and positively motivated professional, capable of meeting contemporary law enforcement standards of performance.

Values:

A - Accountability
P - Professionalism
S - Service
C - Character

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CHAIR DUNBAR commented that a coalition of police chiefs contacted legislators regarding \$500,000 to produce a manual. He asked about the fee and how it relates to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied the Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police (AACOP) requested a \$500,000 grant to have a company compile a standardized operations procedure manual. They planned to share it with police departments statewide. Communities could tweak it to meet their needs. It could be a statewide standardized manual if that is the direction police departments want to go. Compiling a standardized procedure manual is a daunting task, especially for smaller police departments. The contracted company would compile a policy manual based on best practices. Other departments could adopt and fine-tune it to their needs.

CHAIR DUNBAR asked whether the policy manual would dovetail with the standards upheld by the Alaska Police Standards Council.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL answered the policy manual is separate from the council's standards though the council could offer guidance to the contractors.

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SENATOR BJORKMAN said a big concern on the Kenai Peninsula and in many places statewide is trooper response time. He asked what the legislature could do to help reduce trooper response time.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied that B Detachment, which covers the MatSu Valley and west, is grossly understaffed to meet its obligations. The ultimate goal is 415 troopers; that would be adequate.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL said the police force is reactive, not proactive, right now. The department lost proactive functions like a full-time borough highway patrol, domestic violence (DV) support troopers, and VPSO oversight troopers in 2015-2016. He said it is now a reactive police department. There is only a little time to do general patrol. Troopers are running back and forth and taking reports. He likened the situation to killing a moose; the work starts after the kill. Likewise, all the work begins after an arrest. Depending on the type of arrest, the trooper has to complete reports, process criminal complaints, get search warrants, and transport suspects to jail. It takes time. The average driving under the influence (DUI) arrest takes four to five hours to process. When the trooper stops a car, the person is processed and transported to Wildwood Correctional Complex. Then the trooper returns to the office and starts the reports. The bottom line is that to make a difference in rural and urban Alaska, the department needs more staff. The department has to fill the positions and keep them filled.

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked how many law enforcement troopers the department has.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL answered the department is authorized for 320.

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked whether the ultimate goal of 415 troopers includes wildlife troopers.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL answered no. That is just state troopers. He would like to increase the number of wildlife troopers by 10 for a total of 100. He said in a perfect world that he would like the additional state troopers all at once. However, recruitment challenges would make that difficult. He expressed his belief that he could fill an extra ten state trooper positions each year, and it would be better for the budget to do it that way.

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CHAIR DUNBAR commented that, overall, crime fell about 15 percent. He asked to what the commissioner ascribes the decrease. He asked whether that is year-over-year or in the last several years.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL answered the department has seen a decrease in crime in the last few years. Trends can tweak those numbers one way or the other, especially in a state as small as Alaska. He explained that it would take two more cycles to know if the decrease was an anomaly. He said Anchorage increased its number of police officers. He said he had an inkling that this affected crime suppression in Anchorage and increased crime in the Valley. He said it would take one or two more cycles to know whether the 15 percent reduction was an anomaly due to COVID.

CHAIR DUNBAR expressed his belief that Anchorage increased the number of officers from 350 to 420 in the last several years. It was a significant reinvestment in the police department.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL commented that the number of people under Department of Corrections (DOC) supervision makes a difference in crime. A person cannot recommit a crime if they are back in jail. DOC has 4,500 to 5,000 people under its supervision; this puts a bite in crime. He recalled that in 2017-2018, perpetrators were released and cited the law change under Senate Bill 91 [chapter 36, SLA 2016].

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At ease.

PRESENTATION(S) : DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS OVERVIEW

[2:19:45 PM](#)

CHAIR DUNBAR announced an overview of the Department of Corrections (DOC) presented by Commissioner Designee Winkelman. He invited the commissioner designee to put herself on the record and begin the presentation.

[2:20:30 PM](#)

JENNIFER WINKELMAN, Commissioner Designee, Department of Corrections (DOC), Juneau, Alaska, presented the department overview. She mentioned that corrections was originally under the Department of Health and Social Services. An executive order moved corrections into its own department in 1984.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN summarized slide 2, Mission and Core Services:

Mission: To provide secure confinement, reformative programs, and a process of supervised community reintegration to enhance the safety of our communities

Department FY2024 Positions: 2,109 PFT

Department FY2024 Budget Request: *\$419,410.9
[just over \$4 million]
*\$ in thousands

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN said the chart on slide 2, shows each department division and its core service areas. She said she will review each of the following divisions in the presentation:

- Institutions
- Health and Rehabilitation Services
- Pretrial, Probation and Parole, and
- Administrative Services.

[2:22:14 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN reviewed slide 3, DOC at a Glance:

- Alaska is one of seven states that operate a unified correctional system. A state unified system is one in which there is an integrated state-level prison and jail system.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN explained that Alaska's jails and prisons are under one umbrella. Some un-unified states will have jails operated by boroughs, cities, sheriff offices, and courts. Alaska integrated its jails and prisons.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN summarized these at-a-glance facts:

- DOC booked 27,748 offenders into its facilities in FY2022
 - 16,978 were unique offenders

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN said unique offenders are those who return more than one time.

- 660 were non-criminal Title 47 bookings
- As of January 1, 2023, DOC was responsible for 10,748 individuals
 - 4,404 offenders in jail or prison

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN said 4,404 equates to about 85 percent capacity. She stated her intention to talk more about this later in the presentation.

- 191 offenders on sentenced electronic monitoring (EM)
- 339 offenders in community residential centers (CRCs)
- 3,163 offenders on probation or parole
- 2,651 defendants on pretrial supervision (1,864 on pretrial EM)

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN advanced to slide 4, which shows the department's organizational chart and leadership. She noted

that DOC houses the parole board budgetarily, but the board is fully autonomous. Those appointed and confirmed report directly to the State Board of Parole.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN spoke to slide 5, Division of Institutions that starts the process. It is the division that provides secure confinement with an emphasis on public safety, the process of rehabilitation, and community reintegration:

DIVISION OF INSTITUTIONS

- **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 reviewed the chart on slide 6, Facility Capacity. She explained a facility reaches maximum capacity when the department fills all its general population and half of its segregation beds. The department works hard to keep the number of filled beds below general capacity. It is significant to inmate and officer safety to keep capacity numbers down. She explained the factors that make this a difficult task.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN reviewed the chart on slide 7, Prison Population by Legal Status. She said this is a popular topic, and there are frequent inquiries about it. The department's unsentenced population continues to outgrow the sentenced population. She noted that DOC is a downward agency. It has no control over who is confined or for how long. She identified a few reasons the unsentenced population has grown.

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COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN reviewed the chart on slide 8, Prison Population by Offense Class. The chart shows the breakdown of the prison population by offense as of July 1, 2022:

Class	Percent	Population
Public Order/Admin	13	603
Non-Registerable Sex Offense	Under 1	9
Registerable Sex Offense	18	857
Weapons	2	100
Alcohol	5	236
Drugs	4	198
Vehicle	3	128
Federal Hold	4	197
[Crimes Against a] Person	28	1,337
Probation/Parole	13	621
Property	10	450

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN said she separated registerable sex offense crimes from crimes against a person because the public is interested in the number of individuals in custody for sex offenses. Under the category of registerable sex offense crimes, there were 857. Under the category of crimes against a person, there were 1,337. In total, over 2100 individuals were in custody for crimes against a person.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN noted that DUIs fall under the category of alcohol. Driving on a suspended license or a similar offense falls under the category of vehicle.

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SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked the difference between non-registrable and registerable sex offenders.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN replied there are a few sex crimes that do not require the offender to register. She listed exposure as one. She expressed her belief that online enticement is a non-registerable offense.

[2:32:19 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN advanced to slide 9, Division of Health and Rehabilitation Services. She noted that the department has a constitutional and statutory obligation to provide healthcare to offenders placed in custody. The department provides timely access to essential care through an evidence-based, multi-disciplinary approach. DOC assesses every individual who is booked. The department follows the guidance and standards of the National Commission on Correctional Healthcare. She praised this division for its good work serving the health needs of a really unhealthy population. She summarized slide 9:

- **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

[2:34:56 PM](#)

CHAIR DUNBAR drew attention to "polygraph" listed under Sex Offender Management on slide 9. He commented that he read a little about polygraphs and their effectiveness. He asked to what degree and in what context the division uses polygraphs.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN answered the department uses polygraphs as part of a sex offender's treatment and supervision. It applies to those convicted of a sex offense who have a condition to do sex offender treatment and participate in polygraphs ordered by the court or the parole board. The department supervises using the containment model, a triangle approach to supervision using a probation officer, a treatment provider, and sometimes a community member. Polygraphs are a supervision tool used to gain information and supervise the offender.

CHAIR DUNBAR sought confirmation that polygraphs are a condition of release or are ordered by the court in most cases.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN answered that it is a condition once sentenced. The court or the parole board will order the sentenced individual to sex offender treatment. Participating in polygraphs is typically part of the sex offender treatment.

CHAIR DUNBAR commented that he would continue the conversation offline with the court system for their perspective. He commented it is interesting that the treatment relies on something largely discredited.

[2:36:45 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN advanced to slide 10, Division of Pretrial, Probation & Parole (DP3). This division covers community corrections, overseeing those out in the community. She explained to whom oversight applies. She expressed her belief that there are around 5,000 individuals under community supervision at any time. The Victim Service Unit falls under this division. She reviewed slide 10:

- Probation and Parole Director's Office
 - Victim Service Unit

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN explained that a victim of a registerable crime would receive either automated responses or phone calls if there is any change in an offender's status.

[2:38:14 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON directed attention to the Reentry and Recidivism Unit on slide 9. She asked what programs the unit offers so prisoners do not return to the system.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN replied the Recidivism Unit works with programming established in facilities and the community. Primarily the unit works with stakeholders in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD). The unit will:

- work with job support specialists and reentry coalitions,
- will ensure individuals get bus tokens,
- know where the individual should look for available housing, and
- work with communities that have reentry coalitions to do outreach.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN directed the question to the Division of Health and Rehabilitation Services director.

[2:39:29 PM](#)

CHAIR DUNBAR invited Mr. Rutherford to put himself on the record.

[2:39:33 PM](#)

Adam Rutherford, Acting Director, Division of Health and Rehabilitation Services, Department of Corrections (DOC), Anchorage, Alaska, said the division offers a wide array of services internally like education services to get GEDs, employment skill building, resume building, accessing resources available in the community, housing resources, and connecting to Medicaid.

[2:40:34 PM](#)

CHAIR DUNBAR expressed that recidivism and reentry are topics he cares about, and there may be more questions later on this subject.

[2:41:02 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN continued reviewing slide 10:

Division of Pretrial, Probation & Parole (DP3)
[continued from above]

- **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

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN said the department oversees regional and community jails and is responsible for each on this slide. DOC works with each jail independently and the community as a whole to determine the community's needs for their jail. These jails fall under the Division of Pretrial, Probation, and Parole.

[2:41:49 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN summarized slide 11, Board of Parole:

- **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

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN reiterated that the governor appoints parole board members, and the legislature confirms them. The parole board has its own staff. The State Board of Parole has two primary functions:

1. The application process. The parole board reviews applications, hears cases, makes decisions, and recommends conditions.
2. Respond to violations. After the parole board grants parole and the parolee subsequently violates a condition, the parole officer returns the individual to custody. Then the parole board hears the violation and goes through a process similar to a court proceeding.

[2:42:59 PM](#)

CHAIR DUNBAR asked whether there has been a significant change in the number of discretionary paroles in recent years.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN directed the question to the executive director of the Board of Parole.

[2:43:26 PM](#)

SENATOR OLSON joined the meeting.

[2:43:33 PM](#)

JEFF EDWARDS, Executive Director, Alaska Board of Parole, Department of Corrections (DOC), Anchorage, Alaska, replied that there was a slight increase in discretionary paroles in 2022. He briefly explained changes in statutes that impacted the number of discretionary paroles over the past seven years, including the passage of Senate Bill 91, the Omnibus Crime Bill [in 2016], followed by the passage of House Bill 49 [in 2019] that repealed those statutes. He added that the board's makeup was a little bit different, which influenced the fluctuation in discretionary parole numbers too.

CHAIR DUNBAR expressed interest in data over the last ten to twenty years, removing Senate Bill 91 from the discussion, and focusing on fluctuation over time. He commented that the board's

makeup should not really matter. It should be a neutral application of existing laws.

MR. EDWARDS said he would supply the numbers for the committee.

[2:45:07 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN spoke to the makeup of the parole board. She said that according to statute, three members must reside in different judicial districts, and two are at large.

[2:45:26 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN advanced to slide 12, Division of Administrative Services. She said that DOC's Administrative Services Division is unique statewide because it encompasses areas outside budget and finance. She reviewed the services the division provides on slide 12:

- **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

[2:46:43 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN spoke to slide 13, Office of the Commissioner, stating that the training academy is probably the most noteworthy in this office:

- **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

[2:47:45 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN reviewed the chart on slide 14, Positions by Category, which shows budgeted versus filled positions by category. She said the vacancy rate for the entire department is 13 percent as of today. Some facilities have extreme vacancy rates. She explained the incentivization methods the department is using to recruit workers.

[2:49:29 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked how slide 14 relates to slide 6 with regards to capacity, specifically whether the capacity on slide 6 is a function of the vacancy rate at those facilities.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN answered no. Maximum capacity in a facility contributes to mandatory overtime and involves moving

officers between facilities to cover. The slides do not correlate because each facility must maintain a staffing profile.

SENATOR BJORKMAN sought clarification that the capacity shown on slide 6 pertains to physical space.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN answered yes, beds for inmates.

[2:50:42 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN advanced to slide 15 to discuss the department's primary goals and objectives:

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Health and Well Being of Staff

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN expressed gratitude to her staff, who perform a tough and sometimes thankless job. Their health and well-being are absolutely imperative. She emphasized that if the department has an unhealthy team, then DOC will not be staffed. This pertains to recruitment and retention. If DOC is understaffed, the department will be unable to make a difference to those it serves.

Inmates, Defendants and Probationer/Parolees leave us better than when they entered the system

Identifying Efficiencies and Resources to Reduce Recidivism

[2:53:08 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN took the opportunity to address inmate deaths. She expressed that one death is too many for the families affected, staff, and herself. She spoke about health challenges, stating over half of those in DOC's custody arrive with a chronic medical condition. She said the department wants to do better daily, so those in custody leave better than they entered the system. She shared improvements the department has made to this end. She emphasized that correction officers save lives all the time, whether it is an inmate that collapsed for medical reasons or the prevention of a suicide. Inmate deaths affect everyone. She said she would be remiss if she did not address this subject. She said the department would do and be better.

[2:57:57 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked whether the department tracks recidivism.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN replied yes. The Research and Records Section tracks it.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON discussed the importance of well-being for staff.

[2:58:57 PM](#)

CHAIR DUNBAR invited the commissioner to make closing comments.

COMMISSIONER DESIGNEE WINKELMAN displayed slide 16 and acknowledged the K-nine Unit dogs shown on the final slide.

[3:00:03 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Dunbar adjourned the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 3:00 p.m.