

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 7, 2023

3:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

SENATE STATE AFFAIRS

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair
Senator Matt Claman, Vice Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Kelly Merrick

HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS

Representative Laddie Shaw, Chair
Representative Stanley Wright, Vice Chair
Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Jamie Allard
Representative Jennie Armstrong
Representative Andi Story

MEMBERS ABSENT

SENATE STATE AFFAIRS

All members present

HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS

Representative Craig Johnson

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 COCKREL, Commissioner
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Delivered an overview of the Department of Public Safety.

BRYAN BARLOW, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in the overview of the Department of Public Safety

MARYBETH GAGNON, Criminal Justice Planner
Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the overview of the Department of Public Safety.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Delivered an overview of the Department of Corrections.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions and provided information during the departmental overview.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:31:09 PM](#)

CHAIR SCOTT KAWASAKI called the joint meeting of the Senate and House State Affairs Standing Committees to order at 3:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Claman Merrick Bjorkman, Chair Kawasaki; and Representatives Carpenter, Allard, Armstrong, Story, Wright, and Chair Shaw.

PRESENTATION(S): Department of Public Safety overview

[3:32:51 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the Department of Public Safety (DPS) overview.

[3:33:09 PM](#)

JAMES COCKREL, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Anchorage, Alaska, stated that with support from the governor and the legislature the department has seen positive steps in its recruitment efforts. They have hired more troopers and put 51 troopers through the academy. The VPSO program has zero vacancies and the retention rate is nearly 90 percent. The funding for pay raises has made a difference. He mentioned the benefit of additional equipment including updated tasers, 600 body cameras, new police radios, and upgraded duty firearms that will save money over time. He noted the new policies and procedures that are online for public comment. He restated that the department's trajectory was positive.

[3:38:06 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN asked what the retention was for troopers.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL said there are 50 vacant trooper positions, eight of which are wildlife troopers. It's still a struggle but there was a net gain because of the last two academies.

[3:39:33 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL began the presentation on slide 2, 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 and Major Crime Investigations

[3:39:46 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slide 3, and spoke to the Department Successes in 2022:

- Added two missing and/or murdered indigenous people investigators.

He noted he intended to add more investigators going forward.

- Seized 13,425,000 potentially fatal doses of illicit fentanyl
- Currently have 68 Village Public Safety Officers
- 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
- Continuing to hire State Troopers; 51 new Troopers started training in 2022
- Expansion of the wellness program
- Body worn camera pilot project scheduled for Spring 2023
 - draft policy posted for public feedback

REPRESENTATIVE SHAW asked if the long-term non-permanent investigators were civilians.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied they're retired Alaska State Troopers. They receive a salary but no benefits.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL discussed the organizational chart on slide 4. There are four divisions. The deputy commissioner has oversight of the Division of Fire and Life Safety, the Division of Statewide Services, and the Public Safety Training Academy. Four boards and commissions are housed within the department and the commissioner oversees the rest of the department.

[3:43:21 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked if the additional investigators he mentioned were in the budget request this year.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL answered no; the department typically does not budget for long-term non-permanent positions. Funding for these positions generally comes from either vacancies or overtime.

[3:44:04 PM](#)

BRYAN BARLOW, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Anchorage, Alaska, displayed slide 5 and explained that the map on the right depicts the Alaska State Troopers' areas of responsibility. The color coded areas reflect the eight detachments. He spoke to the following:

Division of Alaska State Troopers

- Alaska Bureau of Investigation

- Major Crimes Investigations
- Technical/Financial Crime Investigations
- Statewide Drug and Alcohol Enforcement
- Four Detachments
- Statewide Support
 - Search and Rescue Coordination
 - Advanced Training Unit
 - Recruitment Unit
 - Prisoner Transport
- Dispatch

[3:45:38 PM](#)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW reviewed the Division of Alaska State Troopers accomplishments and challenges on slide 6.

Accomplishments

- Seized 215 percent more methamphetamine, 440 percent more fentanyl, and 334 percent more heroin from 2021.
- Solved 85 percent of homicides within trooper jurisdiction.
- Expanded the two on/two-off posts in rural Alaska.
- Online reporting program once implemented will reduce workloads for Troopers on the road.

Challenges

- Recruitment and Retention problems are the same as is seen in law enforcement nationwide.
- Technological changes in how crimes are committed.
- Importation of drugs and alcohol into rural Alaska.
- Rural housing for Troopers.

[3:49:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG asked how many troopers are on the two-on/two-off schedule and the number who live out-of-state when they're not working.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW said he would follow up with information about the numbers of those positions. All but one currently reside in Alaska and the practice moving forward was that all Alaska State Troopers live and work within the state.

[3:50:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked how much was in the current budget for rural housing for troopers.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW said he'd follow up with the exact numbers. The department has about 60 units throughout the state that it leases or owns for trooper and other staff housing.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL added that the department received \$3 million in federal funds last year to use for rural housing. The department is obliged to send troopers to the rural areas of the state and they have to have decent housing, office space, and connectivity.

[3:52:39 PM](#)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW advanced to slide 7 and explained that the Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers has a northern and a southern detachment that focus on the protection of wildlife resources, both sport and commercial. He discussed the division's 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

[3:53:27 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL turned to slide 8. The chart shows zero vacancies in the VPSO job class; 50 vacancies in the trooper job class; and there are 410 total budgeted trooper positions, 360 of which are filled.

Department Vacancies: Troopers and Village Public Safety Officers

Total as Of 12/31/2022

- **Budgeted:** Total number of permanent, full-time positions budgeted in the current fiscal year.

- **Actual:** Total number of filled positions at the time of this report
-
- **Vacant:** Total number of vacant positions at the time of this report
- **Positions**
 - Troopers include the rank of Recruit through Major and include State Troopers and Alaska Wildlife Troopers
 - Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs)

SENATOR CLAMAN asked if the department was seeing the same trend as the Anchorage police and fire, prosecutors, and public defenders that there are senior staff, but most people stay for about five years and then leave.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL said troopers did leave after about five years before they received a pay raise, but the more competitive salaries had stemmed that somewhat. He noted that most senior staff were eligible for retirement.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked when the pay increase passed.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied it was 2019.

[3:55:49 PM](#)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW displayed slide 9 and reviewed the Aircraft and Marine Sections.

Aircraft Section

- Law enforcement response/investigation
- Search and rescue
- Wildlife resource protection
- Prisoner transport
- Major fleet refreshment underway
 - 44 fixed wing and rotor wing aircraft
 - 19 aircraft bed-down bases
 - 5,667 hours flown in 2022 (calendar year)

Marine Section

- Marine fisheries enforcement
- Search and rescue
- Fleet management

- Two 35' vessels and two patrol skiffs being built to replace older vessels
- P/V Stimson, Kodiak (156' deployable statewide)
- P/V Enforcer, Juneau (84' being decommissioned)
- P/V Cama'i, Kodiak (69' catamaran)
- 12 medium-sized vessels (27' to 35') in 12 different communities
- Multiple other small skiffs and river boats

[3:57:00 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL stated that, as currently structured, the Village Public Safety Officer Program was running as smoothly as he'd ever seen. The department's budget request includes funding for a full-time director.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW advanced to slide 11, and reviewed the 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
- Engineering
- Education

Accomplishments

- 664 building fire and life safety inspections
- 776 fire and building plan reviews completed
- 45 significant fire investigated
- New web-based application to process permits deployed on Nov 17, 2022; 170 applications processed in 2-4 weeks

Challenges

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

[3:58:55 PM](#)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW turned to slide 12 and reviewed the Division of Statewide Services.

Alaska Public Safety Communication Services

- Supported 12,409,758 Alaska Land Mobile Radio System (ALMR) calls and 20,436,826 push to talks

- Completed update of site repeaters in all State owned sites; 72 site repeater locations

Information Systems

- Linked over 30 years of historical case files to the current Records Management System
- Deployed a new Online Police Reporting program

Criminal Justice Information Systems Program

- Secured multiple federal grants to support Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) modernization efforts
- National Incident Based Reporting System repository purchased with federal grant funds, 30 law enforcement agencies participating

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 percent per AS 44.41.065

[4:00:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT asked if he was happy with the Alaska Land Mobile Radio System (ALMR) move to DPS.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW answered it's a good fit. DPS is a major user of the ALMR system and it is integrating well into the department.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW advanced to slide 13, Alaska Scientific Crime Detection Lab. On the left is a line graph of the annual DNA submissions and backlog from FY2012-FY2023. On the right, the following information is provided:

- ~ The governor's FY2023 budget added five DNA scientist/forensic technician positions.
- ~ Days for the lab to process casework in FY2022 and YTD FY2023:
 - DNA Sex assault casework dropped from 70 in FY 22 to 55 YTD FY23.
 - All DNA casework dropped from 120 in FY22 to 55 YTD FY23.
 - Forensic alcohol casework increased from 19 in FY22 to 25 YTD FY23.

- Seized drugs casework increased from 23 in FY22 to 49 YTD FY23.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked for the current backlog on testing sex assault kits.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW said he'd follow up with the exact number.

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked him to send the information to the chairs' offices and they'd distribute it to the members.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW said there's been a dramatic decrease in the backlog.

[4:02:22 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL said that to his knowledge there was zero backlog of sex assault kits due to the SAKI grant program. Current sex cases are processed in about 55 days. An app is close to going live so a sex assault victim can track their case through the entire process. Substantial gains have been made on the handling of sex assault kits. A sex assault kit from Fairbanks, Bethel, Nome, and Kotzebue must be in the crime lab within 30 days, and once it arrives the kit doesn't leave the lab.

SENATOR CLAMAN recalled that the legislation that passed last year placed a timeline on testing new kits within 90 days.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied the results must be done within 90 days; currently, the average turnaround is 55 days.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked for confirmation that testing was in compliance with the law.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL answered yes, thanks in large part to the legislature for funding the positions needed to make that happen.

[4:04:14 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slide 14, Uniform Crime Reporting. It provides bulleted information and bar charts that reflect data from the 2021 Crime in Alaska publications and the 2021 Felony Sex Offense publication.

He said the number of sex assaults reported to law enforcement throughout Alaska is still climbing. In 2022, approximately

1,500 felony-level sex assaults were reported in the state. The caveat is that about 50 percent of these crimes are not reported. Of the 1,500 reports, 338 were in Western Alaska and 304 of the victims were Alaska Native women. Statewide, Alaska Native women are victims of sex assault at a higher rate than any other race in the state, and they are a smaller percentage of the population than other races.

[4:05:29 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slide 15, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). He described these staff members as probably the most dedicated of any in the department. He spoke to the following:

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-member Board of Directors
- Eleven full-time staff
- Fund 34 community-based agencies serving Utqiagvik to Unalaska
- Manage and monitor a total of 90 grant awards
- Created 4-year Violence Against Women Act/Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors State Implementation Plan to prioritize training and service needs to better prevent and respond to interpersonal violence
- Began implementing a Language Access Plan

He highlighted that consistent funding is the biggest hurdle CDVSA faces. They rely heavily on federal funds.

[4:06:55 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL advanced to slide 16, Violent Crimes Compensation Board, whose mission is to alleviate some of the financial burden victims face following a violent crime. This board was moved last year from the Department of Administration (DOA) to DPS. When the board was formed in 1973 it had three staff to process 15 applications for compensation. The board still has three staff, but the number of applications has risen to more than 1,000. The department has requested two additional staff in the governor's budget to expedite processing of these claims. He said his only concern is about the source of the

funding for these additional positions. It is coming from the board's existing funding from prisoners who have to donate their permanent fund to the state. This reduces the amount of funding for victims of violent crime.

[4:08:03 PM](#)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW advanced to slide 17, Alaska Police Standards Council, and spoke to the following:

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

CHAIR KAWASAKI listed the individuals who were available to answer questions.

[4:09:09 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG asked if he could share the budget for the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and the funding the department was seeking.

[4:09:38 PM](#)

MARYBETH GAGNON, Criminal Justice Planner, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Juneau, Alaska, answered questions during the overview of the Department of Public Safety seeking approximately \$3 million to assist in compensating victims in the shelter program, rehabilitation and other programing.

[4:10:39 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked if the seven positions that the legislature funded last year to address domestic violence and sex assault, and missing and murdered indigenous persons (MMIP) investigations had been filled and how that work was going. She called the data the commissioner shared alarming.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL clarified that the new investigators he mentioned were not attached to the governor's MMIP initiative. One of the two tribal liaisons had been filled and was embedded in the VPSO program and recruiting was ongoing for the second.

Recruitment was ongoing for the four victim witness coordinators; the supervisor position had been filled.

4:13:10 PM

REPRESENTATIVE STORY referenced the more than 12 million Alaska Land Mobile Radio System (ALMR) and push to talk calls that the Alaska Public Safety Communication Services supported. She asked if there was any way to break the calls down by region to pinpoint particular needs.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL clarified that these are radio communications between dispatchers or troopers to a dispatcher. He offered to follow up and potentially provide more granular detail.

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT asked if there was any concern associated with transitioning service weapons from 40 caliber to 9 MM since the latter has greater potential to penetrate more than intended.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied the stopping power was similar for both types of ammunition but the 9MM was much less expensive. Other factors were also involved in the decision to upgrade the firearm system. He suggested that further discussion could be done offline.

4:15:01 PM

SENATOR CLAMAN asked what the plan was this year to increase services in rural Alaska that might make a difference in the rates of sex assault and domestic violence.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied that addressing sex assault and domestic violence crimes in rural areas is a priority and will continue to be so as long as he's commissioner. These areas have been undeserved for too long. However, adding more police isn't necessarily the answer to address interpersonal crimes. Also, DPS doesn't have the capacity to place more troopers in rural areas at this time. Perpetrators will continue to be prosecuted and sex assaults will continue to be investigated.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked, if it's not possible to place more troopers in rural areas, whether there was a plan to increase the number of VPSOs in the budget this year.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied that the department currently did not have a budget ask for additional VPSO officers, but it was

an oversight. The intention was to add 10 additional VPSOs, and the ultimate goal was to have 120 of those positions.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked if the department would welcome additional VPSOs if they were added during the budget process.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL said absolutely.

[4:17:37 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked him to talk about what the department was doing to reduce trooper response times on the Kenai Peninsula.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL noted that they discussed this before and that it would require more troopers. He acknowledged that coverage in both urban and rural Alaska was not adequate and that was due to an insufficient number of troopers to cover the areas. He reminded the members that when he joined the department in 1983, it had more troopers than it does in 2023 and the population had increased by more than 200,000 in that time and crimes were more complex and violent. He highlighted that 50 patrol troopers are assigned to the MatSu Valley up to Talkeetna and the population is 119,000. This was equivalent to having four deputy sheriffs patrolling all of West Virginia. It's a ridiculous situation.

[4:20:01 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked how trooper coverage compares between the Kenai Peninsula and the MatSu Valley.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL answered that there are fewer troopers on the Kenai Peninsula, the population is less, and the area covered is less. He noted that many of the crimes in the MatSu area were committed by Anchorage residents. He opined that the reason was that the Anchorage Police Department had stepped up patrols and officer numbers so it was easier for offenders from Anchorage to "rape and pillage" in the MatSu Valley. The same applied on the Kenai Peninsula, troopers were spread too thin.

[4:21:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked how much of the DPS budget was allocated to behavioral health and addiction treatment.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL agreed that more mental health services were needed in this state, but that was outside DPS's purview as a law enforcement agency.

[4:24:14 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI highlighted that Anchorage has a tax base and a fairly large portion of property tax assessments go to fund police. He asked if there were communities in organized boroughs that have a tax base, but do not provide a police force and instead rely on Alaska State Troopers to provide law enforcement.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied, "I think you know that answer as well as I do." He acknowledged that the troopers were providing services for some areas of the state that have a tax base.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked for the names of those areas.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL answered MatSu Valley, Kenai Peninsula, and the Fairbanks North Star Borough. He added that Ketchikan has a fully functioning police department and the troopers provide services outside their jurisdiction.

[4:25:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER requested the name of the organization that has oversight of standards.

COMMISSIONER COCKRELL replied it's the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

CHAIR KAWASAKI advised that the members may forward additional questions that the chairs would forward.

[4:26:24 PM](#)

At ease

PRESENTATION(S) : DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS OVERVIEW

[4:29:21 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reconvened the meeting and announced an overview of the Department of Corrections by Commissioner-Designee Jennifer Winkelman.

[4:29:34 PM](#)

JENNIFER WINKELMAN, Commissioner-Designee, Department of Corrections, Juneau, Alaska, began the overview of the department with the mission statement and description of the core services of the department. She noted that it was through executive order that DOC became a standalone department in 1984.

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 permanent full-time employees (PFT)
- Department FY2024 Budget Request: \$419,410.900

The four divisions, Institutions; Health & Rehabilitation Services; Pretrial, Probation, and Parole; and Administrative Services meet the core services of secure confinement, programming, and release. The table shows what division hits what part of the mission.

[4:31:05 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN spoke to slide 3:

DOC AT A GLANCE

- Alaska is one of seven states that operate a unified correctional system. She explained that a state unified system is one in which there is an integrated state-level prison and jail system.
- DOC booked 27,748 offenders into its facilities in FY2022.
 - 16,978 were unique offenders. She explained that this means multiple offenders were booked into the facilities multiple times. One particular offender was booked into a facility on criminal charges 94 times over three years, which is equivalent to once every ten days.
 - 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
 - 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)

[4:32:34 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN displayed slide 4 that provides an overview of the structure of DOC. She noted that the Board of Parole is housed within the department for budget purposes, but it is autonomous; those staff point directly to the five member Board of Parole. She noted that leadership has over 150 years of Alaska DOC experience. The chart read as follows:

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

- Commissioner's Office
- Division of Institutions
- Division of Health and Rehabilitation Services
- Division of Pretrial, Probation and Parole
- Division of Administrative Services
- Parole Board

[4:33:22 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN turned to slide 5 and described the Division of Institutions. The slide read as follows:

DIVISION OF INSTITUTIONS

- Institution Director's Office
 - Inmate Time Accounting
 - Chaplaincy Program
 - Prison Rape Elimination Act Oversight
 - Inmate Grievance Resolution

She explained that the individual in this position works to resolve grievances before they result in a lawsuit.

- 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

[4:35:09 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN displayed slide 6 that provides a visual of the institutional capacity and jail locations on January 1, 2023. The yellow bar represents the general capacity, which is all beds in the general population. Segregation beds are excluded. The red bar represents the total maximum capacity, which is all the general beds plus half the segregation beds. She highlighted that all the facilities were below their general capacity. This enhances employee wellness and safety within facilities.

She referenced a question she fielded before the meeting about whether capacity was constrained by vacancies within the department. She explained that staff are transferred between institutions to ensure the department meets its staffing profile.

[4:36:21 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN turned to slide 7, PRISON POPULATION BY LEGAL STATUS. The chart shows that the unsentenced population continues to grow. While there are many reasons, there is anecdotal evidence that people are entering with more serious charges and those cases take longer to dispose. She noted that the numbers on the chart do not include the nearly 200 unsentenced federal holds.

[4:37:37 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN displayed the pie chart on slide 8, PRISON POPULATION BY OFFENSE CLASS. She pointed out that crimes against a person make up the largest sector. Sex offenses are broken out of crimes against a person because of the particular interest in seeing the population makeup of sex offenders in custody.

[4:38:34 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK asked how many people fall into more than one category on the chart.

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN replied there are many and she would follow up with the exact numbers.

SENATOR MERRICK asked what rubric is used to determine what category a person falls into.

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN replied it is the most serious crime she would follow up with the other numbers.

[4:39:20 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN displayed slide 9 and spoke to the following:

DIVISION OF HEALTH & REHABILITATION SERVICES (HARS)

- 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+)

She shared that the department has a constitutional and statutory obligation to provide timely access to medical and behavioral health care to those in custody. Best practices are utilized.

- Substance Abuse
 - Assessment
 - Residential Treatment
 - Institutional Out-Patient Treatment
- Sex Offender Management
 - Polygraph
 - Institutional Sex Offender Program
 - Community Sex Offender Program

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN noted that a full list of sex offender programs is on the department website.

- Domestic Violence Program
 - Batterer's Intervention Program
- Reentry & Recidivism Unit
 - Offender Reentry
 - Community Coordination
- Education/Vocational Programs
 - Basic Adult Education

- Apprenticeship Training
- Vocational Training

[4:41:09 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN turned to slide 10 and noted that in 2018 the Division of Probation and Parole was blended with the Division of Pretrial Enforcement to improve efficiency. She discussed the following:

DIVISION OF PRETRIAL, PROBATION, & PAROLE (DP3)

- 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

[4:43:09 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN turned to slide 10 and added to her earlier commentary about the Board of Parole:

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

[4:44:02 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN displayed slide 10 and reviewed the following:

DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

- 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

[4:45:16 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN displayed slide 10 and discussed the following:

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

- 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

[4:46:13 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN displayed the bar chart on slide 14 that reflects the budgeted versus filled DOC positions by category. She acknowledged that DOC was faced with the same workforce issues that Commissioner Cockrell mentioned. She highlighted the overall statewide vacancy rate of 13 percent, but acknowledged the significantly higher rates in certain areas. For example, the vacancy rate at the Spring Creek

Correctional Center in Seward inmates still need to be fed and receive medical care. This leads to outside contracting and greater expense. She discussed the things DOC has done to fill positions. She relayed her ongoing view that if the department works on retention, recruitment will take care of itself. She described those efforts including attendance incentives, scheduling to accommodate preferred shift assignments, and building a travel unit of officers willing to cover different areas.

[4:49:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT asked for additional information about the traveling unit.

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN said the idea is to develop a unit in more urban areas where positions are easier to fill and housing is more readily available. Those individuals would cover vacancies in other areas.

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT asked how long individuals in the travel unit would be away.

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN replied that these individuals would fill in for a typical shift, which for a correctional officer is a week on and a week off. She acknowledged that planning for the unit was in the early stages.

[4:50:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY mentioned staffing shortages and asked her to discuss the physical care of individuals who come into custody, how their needs are assessed, and if there were any funding gaps that affect the assessments and care.

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN said the department utilizes contract and locum services to ensure there is a qualified professional to meet individuals who enter custody. She deferred the question about health care to Adam Rutherford.

[4:52:10 PM](#)

ADAM RUTHERFORD, Acting Director, Division of Health and Rehabilitation Services, Department of Corrections (DOC), Anchorage, Alaska, explained that medical care begins at intake. Each individual receives an in-depth assessment. They are interviewed and their medical records and releases are reviewed. Standardized screening forms are used. Based on the information that's disclosed on intake, there can be referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment. There are also referrals

to in-house providers for any follow up medical needs. Correctional officers are trained to recognize symptoms that indicate someone needs medical attention. Nursing staff make rounds in a facility. There is also an established process for offenders to request care and or services, including access to specialty care that are referred out. Several facilities offer infirmary care. DOC is also able to provide hospital-level care for individuals with behavioral health needs in certain facilities.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY mentioned the deaths in DOC facilities and asked how the department was assessing these deaths and whether there was a processes to crosscheck identified needs and medications to ensure there isn't a gap in care or a previously unidentified need.

MR. RUTHERFORD said the department upgraded its electronic health record system so there are mechanisms to track individuals who have acute and chronic care needs. This has been helpful in ensuring that quality care is provided. Emphasis is also placed on individuals taking responsibility for their own follow up care.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked if any gaps had been identified in the intake assessment process.

MR. RUTHERFORD replied DOC is always looking for ways to improve their services. He mentioned a new protocol during detox and increasing nursing staff and clinicians in facilities.

[4:58:47 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked what measures the department was taking to keep the population under capacity in the different correctional facilities.

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN said the transportation and classification units look at the daily count every day. If a facility is nearing capacity, the inmates are evaluated to determine whether and where they could be relocated.

SENATOR BJORKMAN said that answers the question on a facility to facility basis, but it doesn't answer what's being done to prevent institutional over capacity when nearly 40 percent of the prison population are repeat offenders.

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN replied that part of population management includes the utilization of halfway houses and electronic monitoring.

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked if the 40 percent repeat offenders was an indication that the justice system in general was encouraging corrections to release individuals when they should not be released.

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN answered no; there is no pressure for DOC to release someone without a court order. However, the growing unsentenced population is an outside factor that is affecting DOC's population management.

[5:02:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT asked about opportunities and barriers for furloughed individuals to go to halfway houses.

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN replied there are barriers for certain offenders to go to certain locations. For example, Anchorage municipal code prohibits the release of sex offenders to a halfway house and Alaska statutes do not allow domestic violence offenders to go on electronic monitoring.

[5:03:32 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN advanced to slide 15 and spoke to the following:

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Health and Well Being of Staff
- Inmates, Defendants and Probationer/Parolees leave us better than when they entered the system
- Identifying Efficiencies and Resources to Reduce Recidivism

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNEE WINKELMAN said she would be remiss if she didn't talk about inmate deaths. The department saw 18 deaths in 2022: 11 via natural causes and 7 by suicide. Each death was investigated internally, by the Department of Public Safety, and the medical examiner. The National Suicide Prevention Foundation implemented Project 25 and is targeting the correctional population because of the sharp increase in suicides in facilities. It is guiding suicide prevention measures within the department. A wellness staff position in the commissioner's office will coordinate between agencies that look into inmate deaths. She noted that the department's website was updated

recently and now has the history of deaths in the facilities and a snapshot of the population. She emphasized that the department was working hard to bring those numbers down.

She concluded the presentation displaying pictures of the department's drug dogs. She noted that the combined total contraband listed on the slide reflected drug interception from more than just the correctional facilities. The canine unit helps with probation and parole, the DEA, and the postal inspector.

[5:10:32 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI thanked her for the presentation and advised that he would follow up with a letter asking for more information about the individuals who died while in custody. He acknowledged that some of the information was protected.

[5:12:22 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committees, Chair Kawasaki adjourned the joint meeting of the Senate and House State Affairs Standing Committees at 5:12 p.m.