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Minnesota Task Force on Corrections Crowding

Interim Report - January 1, 1992

Introduction

Pursuant to the Health and Human Services Omnibus Appropriations Bill, Chapter 292, Subdivision 3, the Task Force on Corrections Crowding has prepared this interim report to the Governor and the Legislature to update them on the progress made thus far.

Task Force Members

In compliance with the statutory requirements regarding task force membership, Minnesota Commissioner of Corrections Orville B. Pung appointed the following members:

Honorable Charles T. Barnes
Judge of the Sixth Judicial District Court

Henry Buffalo
Attorney at Law
Minneapolis

Ellis Bullock
Vice President of Public Affairs
Jostens Incorporated, Bloomington

Michael Cunniff
Chief, Hennepin County Bureau of Community Corrections

Richard Fritzke
Director, Anoka County Community Corrections

Mary Hauser
Commissioner, Washington County Board

James Just
Executive Director
Welcome Home, Minnetrista

Anne Kelly
Executive Budget Officer
Minnesota Department of Finance

Holland Laak
Executive Director
Minnesota State Sheriffs Association

Katie McWatt
Minority Education Program Coordinator
Central High School, St. Paul

Dan Storkamp
Director
Bureau of Criminal Justice Statistics
Minnesota Planning Office

Jenny Walker
Anoka County Public Defender

Frank Wood
Deputy Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Corrections

The task force is staffed by Charles Jakway, Acting Assistant Superintendent of Administration at the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Lino Lakes.

Meetings Held

The task force has met three times. At the second meeting James Just was elected chair and Ellis Bullock was elected vice-chair.

Also at the second meeting, at the invitation of Commissioner Pung, Senator Patrick McGowan and Senator Randy Kelly attended the meeting to discuss the legislative intent at the drafting of the bill.

The task force has also heard presentations from many corrections practitioners and officials on such topics as release, jails, community corrections and prisons, as well as an overview of the corrections department by the commissioner.

Background

While statistics show a recent upsurge of violent incidents in Minnesota, actual total crime rates have not increased in the last ten years. The rate of incarceration, on the other hand, has increased considerably.

This has placed a strain upon the services and institutions provided at the state and local level throughout the State of Minnesota.

What is interesting to note is that while the system has expanded two-fold in the last ten years in terms of probationers, prisoners and inmates, the criminal justice system has still been able to effectively absorb those commitments and caseloads.

According to the Legislative Auditor's report of June, 1991, *Sentencing and Correctional Policies*, "...the praise that Minnesota has received for its corrections policies is deserved. Our correctional system remains one of the more economical ones in the country...Minnesota's corrections policies have been credited with helping the state avoid problems that have reached the crisis point in other states during the 1980s. For example, overcrowded prisons and jails have resulted in federal court intervention in 41 other states (not including Minne-

sota), and corrections is now one of the fastest growing segments of state budgets."

Task Force Duties

Subdivision 2 of the legislation lists the task force duties as follows:

The task force on corrections crowding shall examine the short- and long-range demand for correctional services and facilities and prepare a ten-year plan that fashions a corrections system for the 1990s. The task force shall:

- (1) examine the relationship, interdependence, financing, and functions of the state and local correctional systems;
- (2) review the entire system including felonies, gross misdemeanors, and misdemeanors;
- (3) address the need for juvenile and adult, male and female correctional services and facilities;
- (4) review the community corrections act and its funding formula;
- (5) examine the increase of mentally ill correctional clients;
- (6) recommend an equitable and effective solution for the short-term prison offender;
- (7) examine the state's approach to pre-trial detention, housing of various categories of nonviolent offenders, prerelease counseling, and postrelease supervision; and
- (8) conduct informational forums across the state to solicit ideas and concerns regarding corrections crowding.

Work Plan

The duties as spelled out in Subdivision 2 have been divided into separate and in some cases conjoined tasks and will be addressed by committees formed from within the task force. These committees will be enlisting

assistance from outside the task force. Otherwise, the plan is for the full task force to meet monthly at various facilities throughout the State of Minnesota.

Also, the task force has recently entertained a request from an administrator of a regional facility that more representation from greater Minnesota be enlisted. This issue shall be brought to the commissioner's attention with possible recommendations for appointment.

The task force is required by the legislation to make a final report to the Governor and Legislature by January 1, 1993.

The task force views its charge as a very serious one in the face of mounting public pressure for answers to crime and jail/prison overcrowding.

James Just
Chair, Minnesota Task Force on
Corrections Crowding
January 1, 1992