

FINAL REPORT

Criminal Justice Reinvestment Oversight Committee Section 67-456, Idaho Code (2017/2018)

Members of the Committee

Senator Patti Anne Lodge, Co-Chair
Senator Shawn Keough
Senator Jim Rice
Senator Cherie Buckner-Webb
Senator Mark Nye

Representative Lynn Luker, Co-Chair
Representative James Holtzclaw
Representative Bryan Zollinger
Representative John McCrostie
Representative Paulette Jordan

Staff

Ryan Bush, Principal Legislative Research Analyst
Jared Hoskins, Principal Budget and Policy Analyst

February 1, 2018

I. Committee Charge

The Criminal Justice Reinvestment Oversight Committee was authorized in 2014 by Section 67-456, Idaho Code. The purpose of the committee is to monitor, study and guide analysis and policy development in all aspects of the criminal justice system in Idaho including, but not limited to, monitoring performance and outcome measures as set forth in the Justice Reinvestment Act (JRI) and studying the data-driven justice reinvestment and resource allocation approach and policies to improve public safety, reduce recidivism and reduce spending on corrections in Idaho.

II. Meetings

The committee met on January 24, 2018 at the State Capitol in Boise.

III. Updates Provided to the Committee

At its January 24 meeting, the committee heard from Director Henry Atencio, Idaho Department of Correction. Director Atencio discussed the trends in the incarcerated population and broke down those trends by the populations of termers, riders and parole violators. Director Atencio also discussed how the actual population compares to projections made by the Department and by the Council of State Governments. While the prison population has been increasing, Director Atencio explained that the increase is below the projections of the state before JRI and also below the population project by CSG with JRI. Director Atencio then discussed the Limited Supervision Unit and how that is affecting the workload of parole officers. He indicated that supervision loads are still high, although the twelve officers that were added last year helped.

Executive Director Sandy Jones of the Idaho Commission of Pardons and Parole discussed the trend in first-time parole releases for property and drug crimes post-JRI, the training requirements for various types of parole officers and managers, the observed trends in parolees who are offered rewards versus sanctions and the progress being made in collecting restitution from inmates. Executive Director Jones then broke down diversion reviews that provide alternatives to revocation of parole such as problem solving courts, community re-entry centers, treatment and time in county jail.

Sara Thomas, Administrative Director of the Courts, Idaho Supreme Court, spoke briefly on justice reinvestment. Ms. Thomas informed the committee that while the overall crime rate is decreasing, the number of violent crimes is up significantly. Ms. Thomas also mentioned the success of problem solving courts in Idaho in reducing recidivism, the process for admitting defendants on parole into problem solving courts and the willingness of the Supreme Court to expand its number of problem solving courts. Ms. Thomas stated that there is currently adequate staffing for the problem solving courts, but any expansion of these courts would require additional parole officers. Ms. Thomas added that District 1 was hoping to expand the drug court there, however none of the additional parole officers were assigned there, and therefore they were unable to expand the number of spots available.

Seth Grigg, Executive Director, Idaho Association of Counties, discussed the effect that JRI is having on the counties, particularly how diversion reviews that call for time in county jails are affecting the counties and the limited amount of space in their jails. Mr. Grigg then discussed how raising the statutory limit of the county justice levy could provide relief for many counties dealing with the requirements of JRI. Mr. Grigg also informed the committee that they are pursuing legislation on the cost of confinement reimbursement for counties who house state inmates in county jails and how this could provide relief. Finally, Mr. Grigg discussed the need for increased funding and treatment options for those suffering from mental illness and substance abuse.

IV. Findings / Recommendations

The committee unanimously recommends that the Department be provided with more parole officers and that more Community Re-entry Centers be established as a resource for the recently paroled to reintegrate into society and at the same time to open up higher cost prison beds for new and higher risk offenders.