



OREGON AFSCME

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77TH OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY **JOINT WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY**

Sen. Jackje Winters (Co-Chair)
Sen. Richard Devlin
Sen. Doug Whitsett

Rep. Jennifer Williamson (Co-Chair)
Rep. Jeff Barker
Rep. Bruce Hanna

Re: Public testimony for the 20013-2015 biennial Agency budget for the Department of Corrections.

Madam Co-Chairs and honorable members of the committee,

My name is Tim Woolery; I work as a Staff Representative for Oregon AFSCME Council 75. I directly and indirectly represent approximately 1,800 employees in the AFSCME Security bargaining unit and about 1,200 employees in various other classifications in our AFSCME Security Plus bargaining unit. The represented employees of these units work to keep the citizens of Oregon safe by providing services and security supervision for more than 14,000 convicted felons in facilities spread throughout the state. In addition to working for Council 75 for the last seven years, I was employed for 18 years with the Oregon Department of Corrections. My current duties, along with the help of five of my peers, are directly involved in facilitating and advocating for the advancement of the interests of represented employees in the Oregon Department of Corrections.

Part of my role is in helping to negotiate and enforce the contract between these public employees and the State of Oregon. Frequent communications with the elected leaders and with the 3,000 or more represented employees – who directly provide the vital mission support services of the Agency – provide me with a good perspective on the diversified work that they perform as well as the concerns or grievances that they occasionally have. Before expressing a few things that I wanted to share with you today, I would like to take a few moments to commend as well as echo Director Colette Peters' comments this week during her testimony before this committee. I am specifically referring to her positive comments, appreciation and concerns for the dedication, professionalism and the hard work of the men and women of all classifications within this Agency. While it is natural that there is occasional disagreement on issues or specifics, for the most part the Agency has been good stewards of the budget. I encourage the Agency to continue their efforts at seeking and responding to any suggestions on potential savings from their employees. But the reality is that after several years of successive budget restrictions the Agency is at risk for systemic failures unless it is adequately funded and maintained in a manner that supports the mission while keeping the public, your employees and the inmates safe.

I think most would agree with the premise that public safety is one of several core functions of government. The represented public safety employees in ODOC are nothing short of heroic for many things not the least of which is their fortitude and resolve to come to work each day in potentially one of the most violent and negative environments imaginable. It takes a moment to fully consider the ramifications or extent that society has taken for the laudable goals of improving the overall safety of its citizenry. Collectively by voting on measures, or by their elected representatives, we have created laws which temporarily or permanently remove people from our presence – place them under lock and key – out of sight and mostly out of mind. That concept may hold true for the majority of us but not for the men and women who work for you in the Oregon Department of Corrections. They are unique in that they directly and continuously are working with convicted felons who have been proven to have a tendency of causing harm to themselves or others and were deemed incapable of living amongst us. **An important point that I must make is that evidence shows that high levels of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, high divorce rates and early death much lower than the average life expectancy all plague the men and women who serve you in this career field.** Part of that is the natural stress of a

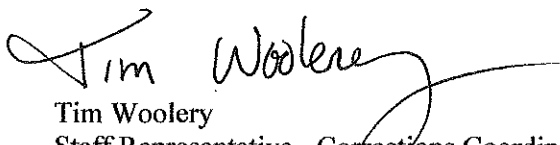
dangerous job but there are other factors involved that can be mitigated. I would encourage you and the Agency to keep that in mind as the budget process unfolds.

ODOC employees faithfully perform the vital services that keep the rest of society safe each 24/7 and 365 days a year. The Governors along with the members of the Legislatures have a challenging part to play in determining whether the state of Oregon is a fair and/or decent employer to work for or not. I submit that while making those decisions that they must do so with the full knowledge that recruitment and retention of superior employees is directly at risk. Unwarranted attacks on PERS and the wages/benefits of these employees are unfair and unwise. These men and women deserve much more for the incredible work they perform each day. Every position in the Oregon Department of Corrections has a role or function to one degree or another on the mission of the Agency to keep the public safe and reduce the likelihood that inmates will reoffend.

A couple of factors are of concern to the employees who work for you in Corrections. One is the inadequate Relief Factor that has not been adjusted since 1995. This impacts the ability of the Agency to provide necessary training and as important – Time away from the job to spend with family. The Agency and the Union have had to negotiate band aids to address this issue that help but do not solve the underlying problem of not having enough staff to perform the work. Staffing is an issue at every facility. Emergency Beds are being brought on line without any more staff which is impacting the safety of everyone inside and outside of the walls. There are concerns with the lack of adequate supervision of some Inmate Work Crews inside the facilities and outside in the public. In some instances, robbing Peter to pay Paul is happening when Security staff is pulled from other duties/areas which are leaving holes in the cohesive fabric of the security structure. In other situations, some facilities allow non-certified / external agency individuals to pick up Inmate Work Crews for work out in the public without the presence of DOC Security supervision.

Oregon AFSCME Council 75 along with the Local Leaderships of the two AFSCME bargaining units of represented employees of the Oregon Department of Corrections are interested in being active participants and in collaborating on this process to preserve or ensure safe, secure and well run facilities. I am available at any time to respond to questions that you may have or arrange meetings with our members who are your constituents.

Respectfully submitted on February 14, 2013



Tim Woolery
Staff Representative - Corrections Coordinator
Oregon AFSCME Council 75