

[2015 Session] Fund Key Items in the Legislative Appropriations Request for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)

Policy Background:

Texas policy-makers should support TDCJ budgetary items that focus on funding for probation and programming that has shown to save taxpayers billions of dollars. Likewise, policy-makers should help probation departments meet the increasing costs of insurance premiums that, if not addressed, will force departments to cut into vital programming.

Prison units that are under capacity, under-staffed, and unable to efficiently operate should be identified for possible closure, with some funds being redirected towards critical community-based programs and services that are proven to work; remaining funds can go towards pressing state needs (e.g., transportation, water development, property tax relief, etc.).

Key Facts:

- TDCJ is requesting approximately \$6.3 billion over two years, not including exceptional items.

10.3% of the request will fund prison diversions through probation & community-based programs, as well as directing special needs offenders into treatment alternatives.

83.3% of the request will fund incarceration and indirect administration.

6.4% of the request will fund the Board of Pardons and Paroles and the operation of the parole system.^[1]

- According to TDCJ's *Legislative Appropriations Request for 2016 and 2017*, projections from the Legislative Budget Board indicate "a stable incarcerated population during the next biennium, slightly declining number of felony

probationers under supervision compared to current levels, and a slight increase in the number of supervised parolees.”[2]

- As of August 2014, approximately 390,000 people were on probation in Texas, with 251,000 on direct supervision (meaning they have at least one face-to-face contact with a probation officer every three months).[3]
- Since 2011, the Texas Legislature has called for the shuttering of 3 adult corrections facilities – reflecting a major shift in attitude among Texas leadership, amidst falling crime rates and better evidence of alternatives.[4]

Relevant Bills:

- **Bill Number:** [HB 1](#) (author: Otto | sponsor: Nelson)
Bill Caption: General Appropriations Bill.
TCJE Materials: [Testimony on House Budget Recommendations regarding the Texas Department of Criminal Justice](#)
Hearing Notice: House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Articles I, IV & V, [Notice of Public Hearing on February 19, 2015](#)
Archived Hearing Video: House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Articles I, IV & V, [02/19/15 Video](#) [TCJE testimony begins at 04:40:00]
Outcome: **Effective 9/1/15**
- **Bill Number:** [SB 2](#) (Nelson)
Bill Caption: General Appropriations Bill.
TCJE Materials: [Testimony on Article V regarding the Texas Department of Criminal Justice](#)
Hearing Notice: Senate Finance Committee, [Notice of Public Hearing on February 23, 2015](#)

Other TCJE Materials:

- [TCJE's Response](#) to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017

Outside Publications:

- Texas Department of Criminal Justice, [Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017](#)

- Legislative Budget Board, *Summary Tables for Legislative Budget Estimates (House 2016-17 Biennium)* – See Figure 1, Article V
- Legislative Budget Board, *Recommendations: House Version* – See Article V [V-5, page 595]
- Legislative Budget Board, *Recommendations: Senate Version* – See Article V [V-5, page 594]
- House Committee on Corrections, *Interim Report to the 84th Legislature* [January 2015]

See *Charge 1*: Study and review the correctional facilities and processes within Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, and Texas Juvenile Justice Department with emphasis on efficiencies, effectiveness, and recidivism. Examine the existing programmatic approach per facility in the areas of the vocation, education, visitation, rehabilitation, health and mental health services, parole supervision, and reentry initiatives. Evaluate opportunities for partnerships between facilities and private industries to offer education, job training, and potential employment for offenders during incarceration, parole, and final release. (pages 9-32)

[1] Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017*, August 25, 2014.

[2] Ibid, p. ix.

[3] Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Statistical Report: Fiscal Year 2014*, pp. iii, 6; http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/documents/Statistical_Report_FY2014.pdf

[4] These facilities include the Central Unit in Sugar Land, the Dawson State Jail in Dallas, and the Mineral Wells pre-parole unit.